



SAMANTHA FLOORED

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu calls 'Bridgerton' star Simone Ashley 'Brown and Beautiful' praising her red carpet look at Met Gala

LEISURE P2



RUSSIA FACES NEW SANCTIONS

The EU proposes its toughest sanctions against Russia, including a phased oil embargo by member countries

INTERNATIONAL P10



LIVERPOOL IN FINAL

Liverpool come from behind to seal a 3-2 win in the 2nd leg CL semifinal against Villarreal, securing a place in final

SPORTS P12

LIC IPO subscribed 67% on day 1

New Delhi: The biggest initial public offering (IPO) in the history of Indian markets, the LIC IPO was subscribed 67 per cent till around 7.00pm May 4, the first day of bidding. LIC policyholders led the initial bout of buying in insurer's IPO as they have subscribed 1.99 times the portion reserved for them. The employees' reserved portion has been subscribed 117 per cent, while retail investors' portion has been subscribed 60 per cent. Non-institutional investors have subscribed 27 per cent of their portion while qualified institutional buyers have bought 33 per cent of allotted quota of the 3.95 crore shares. **MORE P11**

Dreaded Naxalite killed in Jharkhand

Khunti: A dreaded Naxalite was killed Wednesday morning in a gunfight with the security forces in this district of Jharkhand, police said. Laka Pahan (In ptx), the secretary of south Chhotanagpur regional committee of outlawed People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI), was killed in Kota Indipidi forest under Murhu police station area, SP Aman Kumar informed. A special assault team was combing the area when a group of ultras led by Pahan opened fire at them. The security personnel retaliated and in the shootout, Pahan was killed. Over 40 cases were registered against Pahan and there was a bounty of ₹5 lakh on his head, the officer informed.

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Cyclone Asani threat growing for Odisha

Since 2013, Odisha has been ravaged by 7 cyclones, the last one being 'Yash' in 2021, leading to loss of lives and properties

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 4: The Bay of Bengal is all set to see the formation of a new cyclonic storm, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Wednesday. Even though it did not give any specifications, IMD DG Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said that the present environmental conditions are favourable for intensification of the system into a cyclone. Usually the probability of cyclone is high in the month of May.

"We are closely monitoring the developments and only after the low pressure system forms, we can predict the intensity and its probable path. Cyclonic circulation is usually a weak system and leads gradually to the formation of low pressure. Subsequently, the system intensifies into depression, then deep depression and finally a cyclonic storm," said Mohapatra.

In case the storm forms, it will be called 'Cyclone Asani'. If the system moves northwestwards, the eastern coast of India, including Odisha is likely to be affected.

The IMD however, did not make any official forecast regarding the intensity and landfall of the system deciding to wait and watch for the next 48 hours.

Meanwhile in a separate development, amid speculation about the cyclone in Odisha, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain urged the people to abstain from panic buying. He said that this will create artificial shortage while some traders may take advantage of the situation by increasing prices of the items.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Congratulatory notes are pouring in from ministers... we are further down in press freedom index!

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VIATION
SENSEX	55669.03	↓ 1306.96
NIFTY	16677.60	↓ 391.50
DOLLAR	76.60	↓ ₹0.11
EURO	80.41	↓ ₹0.02
GOLD	₹50,601	↓ ₹207
SILVER	₹61,570	↓ ₹912

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	38.2°C	37.4°C
TEMP MIN	21.4°C	23.0°C
Humidity	71%	70%
Rainfall	17.7mm	29.2mm
Forecast	Partly cloudy	sky



People wade through a waterlogged street in Hyderabad after heavy rains lashed the city Wednesday

BRAVING NATURE'S FURY

PTI PHOTO

RBI hikes repo rates

Life will turn worse for the middle-class as it is already struggling with increase in fuel and food prices while EMIs will be higher

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 4: Home, auto and other loan EMIs are set to increase after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) hiked its key interest rate by 40 bps in a surprise move Wednesday in an effort to tame inflation that has remained stubbornly above target in recent months. The increase in repo rate to 4.40 per cent from a record low of 4 per cent is the first since August 2018 as well as the first instance of the RBI Governor-headed monetary policy committee (MPC) holding an unscheduled meeting for raising interest rates.

The RBI also hiked the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 basis points to 4.5 per cent, which will now require banks to park more money with the RBI and leave them with less loan amounts for consumers.

This would drain ₹87,000 crore of liquidity from the banking system, RBI Governor Shaktikanta



Das said in a video address announcing the rate hike decision. He, however, did not mention anything about the reverse repo rate and hence it remains the same at 3.35 per cent.

"Inflation must be tamed in order to keep the Indian economy resolute on its course to sustained and inclusive growth," Das said.

SENSEX, NIFTY TANK

New Delhi: Indian equity benchmarks plunged sharply Wednesday and settled in the red after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a hike in repo rate. Following the RBI announcement, the Sensex declined 1,307 points, or 2.29 per cent, and settled at 55,669 points, whereas Nifty fell 392 points, or two per cent, to 16,678 points. All the sectoral indices too declined in the intra-day trade.

Increases in fuel and food prices, due to the war in Ukraine and sustained pandemic-related supply chain disruptions, have been above the RBI comfort zone of 2-6 per cent inflation for three months in a row. Headline inflation in March rose to a 17-month high of 6.95 per cent and it may be above the target band in April too. **MORE P11**

Ex-gratia increased for martyrs' families

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 4: The Odisha government has doubled the ex-gratia which is being paid to next of kin of Odia jawans, who attained martyrdom either in war and fight against terrorism. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has directed concerned officials to increase the ex-gratia amount from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh, sources said Wednesday.

During the Kargil war, the Odisha government had set up a fund for the welfare of the families of jawans and officers of military and paramilitary forces, who sacrificed their lives for the country. Initially, the compensation amount was ₹1,00,000, which was increased to ₹2,00,000 in 2010 and ₹5 lakh in 2012. This move will certainly inspire more and more persons to join the armed forces as they will now feel that their families are secured as they put their lives on the line for protecting the nation.

Sources said that the decision to increase ex-gratia was being contemplated for some time now, before Patnaik finally took a call Wednesday.

Hurt kid shunted from AC room for BJP MLA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, May 4: A minor girl with serious burn injuries was allegedly shifted out of an AC cabin at the Deogarh district headquarters hospital (DHH) here for treatment of arrested BJP lawmaker Subash Chandra Panigrahi. The MLA was later transferred Tuesday night to VIMSAR in Burla after which the seven-year-old Sneha was once more brought back to the AC room Wednesday. But before that, she had to suffer a lot.

The kid, a resident of Chakrapali village under Barkote block of this district had sustained critical burn injuries in a fire mishap. She was undergoing treatment at the government-run healthcare facility.

Deogarh MLA Panigrahi was recently arrested for allegedly attacking the Tilebani BDO. He was later admitted to the hospital May 1 night as his condition deterio-

rated. For his accommodation, the girl was reportedly shunted out of the AC room.

The incident, when it came to light, attracted criticism from various quarters. The president of BJD's Deogarh unit, Romancha Ranjan Biswal condemned the incident. He said that everyone in a hospital should be treated equally and there should not be any special preferences. "Shifting of the girl for treatment of the MLA is not acceptable at all," Biswal said.

The ADMO of the hospital, Purna Chandra Pradhan however, downplayed the incident stating that an air cooler was installed in the room where the girl was shifted. He, however, refused to divulge details regarding the condition of the girl.

Notably, Deogarh police had arrested Panigrahi May 1 from his official residence in Bhubaneswar. The BDO had accused the legislator of thrashing him and filed an FIR.

RUSSIANS RAPING EVEN UKRAINIAN MEN, KIDS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kyiv, May 4: Rampaging Russian soldiers have not just raped Ukrainian women during the attack on the country, but have not spared men and young boys as per a report by 'The Guardian' quoting United Nations and other officials.

"I have received reports, not yet verified... about sexual violence cases against men and boys in Ukraine," said Pramila Patten, UN special representative on sexual violence in war, at a press conference here Wednesday.

Patten added that it can be particularly challenging for male rape survivors to report the crime. "It's hard for women and girls to report (rape) because of stigma amongst other reasons, but it's often even harder for men and boys to report such acts. We have to create that safe space for all victims to report cases

of sexual violence," Patten was quoted as saying by the report.

Patten warned that dozens of cases of sexual violence against males that are under investigation so far 'only represent the tip of the iceberg'. She urged survivors to come forward, and the international community to find perpetrators and hold them responsible. "Today's documentation will be tomorrow's prosecution. There should be documentation of the crimes being committed by Russian soldiers," Patten said.

Ukraine's Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova had earlier said Tuesday that her office had collected reports of sexual violence by the Russian troops against men and women of all ages, from children to elderly people. This is, of course, to scare civil society... to do everything to (force Ukraine to) capitulate," asserted Venediktova.

Centre to replicate Odisha's DFT model

The project once completed will enable residents in various cities of Odisha get clean and hygienic drinking water directly from the tap

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 4: The Union government has adopted the 24x7 'Drink From Tap (DFT) Mission' launched by Odisha as a national model for replication of the same in other states. The Odisha Water Academy has been empanelled as a leading capacity building institute at the national level while the chief executive of WATCO, Odisha, PK Swain has been nominated as a member of the National Task Force.

A 20-member team from Karnataka led by Urban Development Secretary Ajaya Nagbhusan recently had an interactive session with Principal Secretary, Housing and Urban Development G Mathivathanan along with senior officers of the Water Academy of Odisha. The team visited various

parts of Puri and the state capital to have field level exposure and see the effectiveness of the mission at the ground level. Members also drank water from the taps directly. They expressed deep satisfaction about the approach and effectiveness of the mission. **MORE P4**

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ARIES
A tough, action-packed day ahead! There may be difference of opinions with friends over trivial matters, but you will thrive on it. But all pending work will be completed, much to your relief. It's a promising and optimistic day, says Ganesh!

TAURUS
Today, you may have something at the back of your mind that will grip you with its complexity, says Ganesh. Speak freely as your words are capable of making a great impact on others. You may not be willing to confront unpleasant situations today. Don't worry, the stars seem in your favour, predicts Ganesh.

GEMINI
You are extremely competitive. And it doesn't matter how far behind the competition is. So today, you will continue your usual quest for getting better. You won't have it any other way as you despise mediocrity.

CANCER
Today is a good day for you. However, don't expect a windfall. It is just one of those days when you will be in a good mood, irrespective of your problems, if any. You will treat your subordinates well, and they will show their appreciation.

LEO
Che Guevara may not hold the beacon any more, and the best of the Beatles are long gone. But your desire to revolutionise the world is as strong as ever, says Ganesh. The best ideas are the ones that come suddenly and subconsciously.

VIRGO
Ganesh says today you will be highly motivated. Your creative talents and abilities set you apart as an excellent artist. Words will flow if you give vent to your creativity, and if you choose to sing or dance, you will be the focus of attention.

LIBRA
Gear up to play the peace maker today! Your ability to handle a 'Brady Bunch' hasn't gone unnoticed. So expect to be put in charge of handling disputes among your subordinates at work today, hints Ganesh. Research work may slow to a crawl today, but the offshoot is that it's an auspicious day to enter into new contracts. You might want to arrange that bit of business over lunch.

SCORPIO
You will live the day in two dominant shades, feels Ganesh. One part of your day will be tinted in nostalgia and thinking, while the other will be spent in making up for the time you lost while star gazing and ignoring your work. Do not let the ghosts of your past haunt you because some things are best left behind while making a new beginning, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Look before you leap, says Ganesh. Cupid has strung his bow and aimed an arrow at you. Love's labour will easily aid you to woo a young, tender heart. But don't be swept away by easy prospects and guard your reputation at all costs.

CAPRICORN
You can't bear the weight of the heavy work load any more. Very cleverly, you will complete your tasks and slowly but steadily you take the load off your shoulders, predicts Ganesh. Attentive and observant, you meticulously plan your actions and minimise the chances of errors. Today, your efforts will not be effectively channelised, but it will not be a bad day, also.

AQUARIUS
You are talented, hard working, confident and down to earth. These four characteristics are the pillars of success. Now, it is time to build the building. Your curiosity and desire to achieve your goals will help you with it, feels Ganesh. In order to succeed, you may skip a 'quality check' of your output.

PISCES
A reckless attitude is the root cause of any downfall. Ensure responsible behavior and actions at every step at your workplace, today, suggests Ganesh. Be alert and focused and you will be able to dodge any incoming trouble.

TODDLERS & TIARAS STAR KAILIA POSEY DIES AT 16

American TV series *Toddlers and Tiaras* actress Kailia Posey has died at the age 16, just months after announcing she would be competing in the Miss Washington Teen USA. "A beautiful baby girl is gone. Please give us privacy," her mother Marcy Posey said in her FB post.



MEG RYAN TO DIRECT, STAR IN ROM-COM

Actress Meg Ryan will direct and star alongside Californian star David Duchovny in *What Happens Later*, a romantic comedy. The film is based on the play *Shooting Star* by American playwright Steven Dietz, who also co-wrote the screenplay with playwright and novelist Kirk Lynn, and Ryan.



Sambhabana talks about her show on national TV

Mumbai: Odia actress Sambhabana Mohanty is now seen in the role of Damini in the TV show *Pyaar Ka Pehla Naam Radha Mohan*. The actor feels that both the story and the title of the show are unique.

"For us Indians, especially while growing up, the first form of love was always referred to as 'prem' between Ram-Sita and Radha-Mohan. It is a form of love that is selfless, pure in essence and unique.

In fact, I believe this should be the most exalted form of love. And that love is exactly what we're trying to portray in the show," she says.

Damini, her character in the show, is today's girl, well educated, straightforward and promising. "She has grown up in the same household with Mohan and has been in love with him for the last 12+ years. She is bright, ambitious, handles the house as well as the family business. She's an achiever who doesn't fail, no matter what. The only thing left for her to do is have a successful marital life with Mohan (Shabir Ahluwalia)," she reveals.

The backdrop of the show is Vrindavan, a city rich in history. "Well, we all got the opportunity to visit and shoot in Vrindavan and Mathura, all thanks to the show.

It is a beautiful town full of peace and spirituality. That gave us an immense boost in spirit. Nothing could be more blissful than starting the project from this pious location," adds the actress. **IANS**



BRIDGERTON STAR'S RED CARPET LOOK AT MET GALA

Samantha calls Simone 'brown and beautiful'

Los Angeles: Samantha Ruth Prabhu took to her Instagram story to shower praise on *Bridgerton* star Simone Ashley's red carpet look at Met Gala.

Simone is a British actor born to Indian Tamil parents. Samantha shared a

video of Simone posing for the cameras at the Met Gala 2022 held in New York. She captioned it, 'Brown and beautiful

(heart emoticon) #SimoneAshley #Bridgerton.'

The video was originally shared by Simone along with a few other pictures of her look. Simone had garnered immense love and appreciation from the audience and the critics alike for her performance in the second season of *Bridgerton* where she essayed the role of Kate Sharma.

Samantha, on the other hand, will be next seen in Gunasekhar's mythological drama *Shaakuntalam* and mystery thriller *Yashoda*. **AGENCIES**



NATYADHARA : DAY 4



Mancha Pradeepa, a well known theatre troupe of Bhubaneswar, presented Odia play *Shanti Apaharana Pare* at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Wednesday. Written by Dolamani Kandhari and directed by Avinash Dandapat, the drama conveyed a message that peace is essential to form a healthy society and maintain harmony in life. Theatre personalities Harishchandra Behera, Pradip Panda, Pradeep Biswal and Prakash Maharana attended the festival as guests. The event was a collaboration of Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi, Odia Language, Literature and Culture department and Odisha Natya Sangh.

Ranveer's movie in soup over sex-selection scene

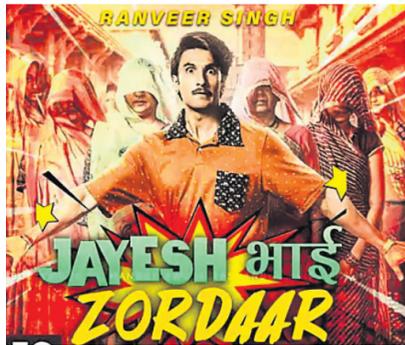
New Delhi: A plea Wednesday was moved in the Delhi High Court challenging the Ranveer Singh-starrer film *Jayeshbhai Jordaar* over a scene in the upcoming movie's trailer which shows the use of ultrasound technology for prenatal sex-determination.

The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was listed before the division bench headed by Acting Chief Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Navin Chawla.

Though the film is to

promote the 'Save Girl Child' slogan and it is against female foeticide, the trailer of the film advertises the use of ultrasound technique, as per the petitioner. A hilarious satire on society -- *Jayeshbhai Jordaar*, produced by Maneesh Sharma, also stars Arjun Reddy fame Shalini Pandey who debuts in Hindi film opposite Ranveer.

The film has been directed by debutant Divyang Thakkar and is releasing May 13. **AGENCIES**



Amartya's next titled Whispers of Storm

Kolkata: National award-winning filmmaker Amartya Bhattacharyya, whose last movie *Adieu Godard* created waves on the festival circuits in India and abroad, is nearly ready with his next film based on the devastation caused by cyclone Fani.

He said the Odia film, titled *Whispers of Storm*, is at present in the post-production stage.

"I visited Odisha after the state was ravaged by Fani in 2019. I witnessed how life there became miserable following the cyclone. But, I didn't want to take the opportunity of the people's suffering and shoot a documentary. So, I created a few characters on my own -- it's a fictional film in a documentary setting," he told PTL.

Bhattacharyya's *Adieu Godard*, which premiered at the 43rd Moscow International Film Festival, recently won the best film in the Indian category at the Kolkata International Film Festival. He is also working on a Bengali musical film with a working title *Adam'er Sontan* (Son of Adam). Rockstar Rupam Islam is the composer of the film along with noted guitarist Amyt Datta while Swastik Choudhury plays the lead.

The film traces the journey of human beings -- how a child born in the Garden of Eden amid nature gradually becomes civilised and eventually gets pissed off by the modern society and wants to go back to nature, shared Bhattacharyya. **PTI**

PEANUTS



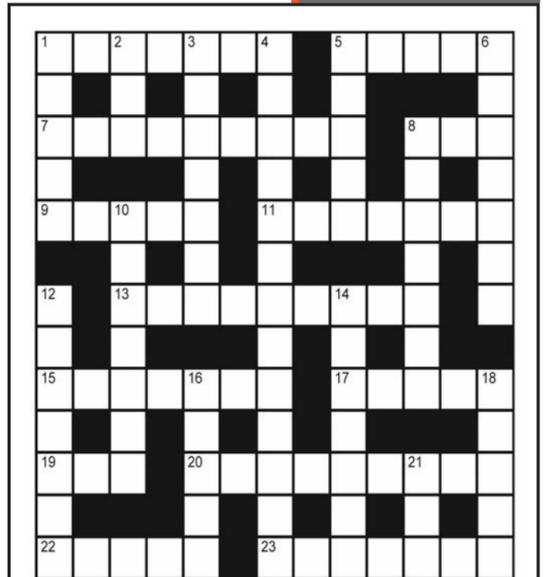
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Biting
 - 5 True health
 - 7 Curriculum
 - 8 Back on board
 - 9 Flubbed
 - 11 Battery material
 - 13 Pause indicator
 - 15 Ritzy
 - 17 Island drum
 - 19 Pea jacket?
- Down**
- 20 Reversal (5-4)
 - 22 Stingless bee
 - 23 Viper
 - 6 Earnest endeavour
 - 8 Rhone River town
 - 10 Echo
 - 12 Arranged in batches
 - 14 Seafood
 - 16 Related maternally
 - 18 Blatant
 - 21 Logger's tool

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



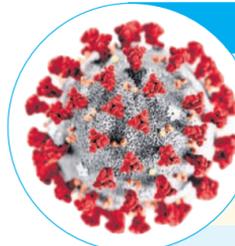
SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



NEW DCP FOR CITY
IPS officer Prateek Singh took charge as the Deputy Commissioner of Police for Bhubaneswar, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER table with columns: World, India, Odisha, and sub-columns: INFECTED, RECOVERED, DEAD.

RATH YATRA AHEAD



Carpenters sawing a log for construction of chariots at Rath Yard in Puri, Wednesday

NHRC notice to Chief Secy, DGP over Bhadrak 'custodial death'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 4: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has served notices on the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police (DGP) in connection with the reported custodial death of a 28-year-old man under Tihidi police limits in Bhadrak in May 2020.



The NHRC asked the Chief Secretary to explain as to why the commission should not recommend Rs 7.5 lakh as compensation to the next of the kin of the deceased.

Routapada weavers feel blessed to weave clothes for the Lord



Weavers at Routapada with the Geetagobinda Pata

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, May 4: The weavers of Routapada under Begunia block in Khurda district are now busy weaving cotton and silk garments for Lord Jagannath and his siblings of Puri Srimandir for this year's Rath Yatra.

temple administration has asked us to supply all the required garments by May 15," said Gopinath. According to Gopinath, the weavers of Routapada are now weaving around 40 varieties of garments including Cheheli Pata, Geetagobinda Pata, Khandua Pata, Ghodani, Adhara Gamuchha, Netaphuta, Boirani, Patani, Tanakhosa, Malamala, Srimukha Ota and Gadiputa for Rath Yatra and other rituals of Srimandir deities.

THE FAMILIES OF WEAVER GOPINATH DAS AND A FEW OF HIS RELATIVES AT ROUTAPADA USUALLY WEAVE VARIETIES OF GARMENTS FOR SRIMANDIR DEITIES FOR SNANA PURNIMA, RATH YATRA AND BAHUDA YATRA



The newly-woven cotton garments for Srimandir deities

2015. We had also supplied clothes during the Nagarjuna Beshha of Lord Jagannath in 2020," said Gopinath. Gopinath's 92-year-old mother Aaseli and his brothers Ramachandra, Bhagawan, Gobinda Chandra, Kailash Chandra, Rabindra Kumar and Ashok have engaged themselves in the weaving of clothes for the deities. This apart, Nimai Charan Kundu, Kartikeswar Patra and a few others are also toiling hard to meet the requirements of Srimandir administration for the mega festival, sources said.

BRAJARAJNAGAR BYPOLL Nomination filing process begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 4: The nomination filing process for the May 31 by-poll to Brajarajnagar assembly constituency in Jharsuguda district began Wednesday, a notification said.

The last date for filing of nominations is May 11, while the documents will be scrutinised May 12

The last date for filing of nominations is May 11, while the documents will be scrutinised May 12 and the last date for withdrawal of nominations is May 17. The counting of votes will be scheduled for June 3. District Collector Saroj Kumar Samal said that five special surveillance teams and five flying squads have been formed to enforce the Model Code of Conduct and take up complaints filed on the EC portal regarding its violation.

A total of 2,14,261 voters are eligible to exercise their franchise in the constituency. In addition to the 257 polling booths which were functional in the 2019 elections, the administration has decided to open 22 more booths. EVMs and VVPATs will be used in the by-election.

JUDICIAL OFFICERS' PENSION SC seeks compliance reports in 4 weeks

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, May 4: The Supreme Court Wednesday directed Odisha and several other states to comply with its direction for revision of the pensions of retired judicial officers.

A two-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices L Nageswara Rao and BR Gavai granted four weeks time to Odisha and other states to file the compliance reports. "We will not grant more time in this connection," the bench said.

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The apex court had earlier asked all states to comply with its 2012 order wherein the court directed that existing pensions of all judicial officers who had retired after January 1, 1996 and the pensioners whose pensions were consolidated as per Karnataka model shall be raised by 3.07 times on par with the other pensioners subject to minimum 50 per cent of the revised pay scale of their respective posts.

Teacher job aspirants allege corruption in recruitment exams

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 4: Hundreds of high school teacher job aspirants Wednesday staged a demonstration at Lower PMG here alleging corruption in the teacher recruitment examinations in the state.

The agitators sought a CBI probe into the alleged irregularities in the recruitment process for high school teachers. They alleged that a computer-based test was conducted by the Directorate of Secondary Education from March 3 to 12 in various examination centres across the state for recruitment of contractual high school teachers.

The exams were conducted via online mode by a local agency which had no experience in handling such responsibilities in the past. There were allegations regarding the leak of question papers during the examinations, claimed the agitators. "The high school teacher posts are being sold out to some candidates against hefty sums. We suspect the involvement of some senior government officials in the irregularities in the recruitment process," said an agitator.

Pendency of criminal appeals in HCs serious matter: SC

THE TOP COURT SOUGHT REPORTS FROM THE HCs OF ALLAHABAD, RAJASTHAN, MADHYA PRADESH, PATNA, BOMBAY AND ORISSA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 4: The Supreme Court Wednesday expressed concern at the pendency of criminal appeals in some high courts for a period between 30-40 years, and sought a report from the High Courts where pendency is high.

A bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and BR Gavai noted that criminal appeals in some high courts are pending for 30-40 years, and sought a report from the courts on measures to reduce this pendency. "Serious matter... just told appeals pending in Allahabad High Court for 40 years," it said.



that suggestions have been submitted to reduce pendency as per the instructions of the top court. As the bench queried appeals of which year are pending in the Madhya Pradesh High Court, counsel replied that there are various appeals between 20-30 years, which are pending, and no appeal is pending for more than 30 years.

During the hearing, the bench noted that every HC has a separate criminal appeal bench, and therefore, there is no need for a special designated court. As counsel suggested developing a procedure to hear new appeals within a time frame, the bench noted that old appeals cannot be kept aside, paving way for hearing of new appeals.

"What will happen to the old appeals? See, this has a cascading effect," it noted. The bench also queried counsel appearing for the Allahabad High Court regarding pendency. It was informed the oldest criminal appeals pending are from 1980. As this, the bench remarked that a person who had committed an offence in the 1970s, at the age of 30-40 years, would be 80-90 years now.

The top court was hearing bail plea by Khursheed Ahmad, as his appeal against conviction under Section 302 of the IPC was pending before the Allahabad High Court. Apart from the state governments, the top court had also sought assistance from Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to address the larger issue of pendency of criminal appeals.

Squall brings down mercury

Bhubaneswar, May 4: People of Odisha heaved a sigh of relief Wednesday after days of intense heat as thunderstorms and rain on the previous night brought down the mercury by several notches across the state, the Met office said.

The maximum temperature fell by around 2-4 degrees Celsius in several places and was below normal in some towns. The minimum temperature also plunged by around two-five notches in many areas, the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre said.

Only eight weather stations, as compared to 18 on the previous day, recorded a maximum temperature of 40 degrees Celsius or more, the Met office said.

The highest temperature in the state was recorded in Boudh at 42.5 degrees Celsius. In the capital city Bhubaneswar, it was 38.2 degrees Celsius, and 37.4 degrees Celsius in neighbouring Cuttack.

The weatherman forecast rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds of 40-50 kmph in the state over the next three days. However, there will be no large change in the maximum temperature in the next four-five days.



The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack received 17.7 mm and 29.2 mm of rain respectively

The weatherman forecast rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds of 40-50 kmph in the state over the next three days. However, there will be no large change in the maximum temperature in the next four-five days

SOME RESPITE

Only eight weather stations, as compared to 18 on the previous day, recorded a maximum temperature of 40 degrees Celsius or more, the Met office said

The highest temperature in the state was recorded in Boudh at 42.5 degrees Celsius. In the capital city Bhubaneswar, it was 38.2 degrees Celsius, and 37.4 degrees Celsius in neighbouring Cuttack

grees Celsius, and 37.4 degrees Celsius in neighbouring Cuttack, the weather office said.

Thunderstorms with light to moderate rainfall occurred at many places across the state.

There was heavy downpour in a few areas of Cuttack, Koraput

and Puri districts over a 24-hour period till 8.30 am.

Banki town in Cuttack recorded 90 mm rainfall, the highest in the state.

The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack received 17.7 mm and 29.2 mm of rain respectively, the

Met said.

The weatherman forecast rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds of 40-50 kmph in the state over the next three days. However, there will be no large change in the maximum temperature in the next four-five days.

CIVIC BODY MEET



The standing committee meeting of BMC was held on the civic body office premises in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

DFT IN 17 TOP CITIES BY DECEMBER 2023

Continued from P1

Available data shows that the scheme has been rolled out for the entire population in Puri Municipality. Presently, a population of around 2.5 lakh in Puri is using the water directly from tap for drinking and cooking without further filtration.

The project is being rolled out also for Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. For this purpose, the state capital has been divided into 98 zones out of which 24x7 DFT has already been started in 10 zones. Target has been fixed to finish the project for 11 lakh people in the capital city by end of December 2023, informed Swain.

Currently, the major localities that are benefiting from DFT are Niladri Vihar, Saheed Nagar, Kalinganagar (K-8 and K3-V), Ishaneswar Basti, Salia Sahi Basti, Puleswar Basti, VSS Nagar and Satya Vihar near Rasulgurh, the official added. Similarly, Cuttack has been divided into 14 zones for DFT out of which work in two have been completed. Work is also going on for completing the project in Berhampur by August 2023.

The project is simultaneously being implemented in different ULBs of Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, and Jajpur districts. A target has been set to bring 17 major cities of Odisha under the project by December 2023.

Under the mission, water is purified as per the parameters of ISN-10500, and then supplied to the consumers on a 24x7 basis. Before actual supply, the pipelines are checked thoroughly, and necessary replacements are made. Regular testing and quality monitoring is done through a modern water testing laboratory already established and made operational.

Chlorine dosing systems with automated programmable logic controllers (PLCs) are installed at the consumer points for ensuring the supply of appropriate quality.

As water in the supply pipes remains under definite pressure for 24 hours, there is no chance of blockage anywhere, and as such, water in the supply pipeline does not get blocked or contaminated, said Swain.

State to have India's first tribal health observatory

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 4: Odisha is set to come up with India's 'only' observatory that will establish a repository on the health of the tribal population in the state, officials said Wednesday.

A Memorandum of Understanding was inked in this regard between the ST and SC Development department and the RMRC, a regional centre of the Indian Council of Medical Research, they said.

The Tribal Health Observatory (TriHOb) is the 'first in the country', and designed to be an effective, evidence-based and a policy-oriented centre.

It will perform systematic and ongoing observation on disease burden, health-seeking behaviour and healthcare delivery system pertaining to tribal health in the state.

During the event where the MoU was signed, 'Mo School' Abhiyan chairperson Sushmita Bagchi also



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launched a tribal family health survey among the indigenous communities.

The survey will lay the foundation for further longitudinal cohort studies and policy-oriented research, the officials said.

The 'Mo School' (My School) initiative aims to create a platform for people to connect, collaborate and contribute to revamping government and government-aided schools in Odisha, they added.

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Keep tabs on Delhi travellers: Govt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 4: With Covid-19 cases rising in Delhi and its adjoining regions, the state government Wednesday asked the Health department to keep a tab on travellers to and from the national capital.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das asked the officials to check the situation and act accordingly so that the spread of Covid can be prevented in Odisha," Das said.

Meanwhile, Delhi Health Minister Satyender Jain said that their government was keeping an eye on Covid situation. Jain added, "Current scenario doesn't warrant for major curbs as the number of Covid hospitalisations are less and the situation was under control."

CUO to join CUET for UG, PG courses

POST NEWS NETWORK



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 4: The Ministry of Education (MoE) has directed all Central Universities to join the Common University Entrance Test-2022 [CUET (UG)-2022] for admission into the undergraduate programmes.

The responsibility of conducting the CUET (UG)-2022 has been given to the National Testing Agency (NTA), an independent organisation established under the MoE with a vision to provide a common platform and equal opportunities to candidates across the country especially those from rural and remote areas.

This was revealed by Central University of Odisha, Koraput Vice Chancellor (I/c) Sharat Kumar Palita at a press conference here Wednesday.

Palita expressed confidence that the CUET will help attract talents from the hinterland of Odisha and also from different corners of the country.

The role of NTA is confined to registration of candidates, conduct of the test, hosting the answer keys, inviting challenges, finalising the answer keys, preparing and declaring the result and hosting the score cards, he said.

The merit lists will be prepared by the participating universities. The universities will have their individual counselling on the basis of the score cards provided by the NTA and final merit lists will be prepared as per the reservation rules and other eligibility criteria specified in the respective university's prospectus, he added.

The CUO has decided to join the CUET (UG)-2022 for which advertisement has already been made. This apart, the university has also decided to join the CUET (PG)-2022.

For CUET (UG)-2022, there is only a 5-yr integrated programme in Mathematics while under the CUET (PG), there will be 12 post-graduate programmes and a BED programme.

Ram Shankar said that for conducting the entrance test, the NTA has set up 28 centres across Odisha. The details regarding the mode of the test, medium of examination, pattern of question, test design and examination scheme are available in NTA website (www.nta.ac.in) and also in the website of the Central University of Odisha (www.cuo.ac.in).

The responsibility of conducting the CUET (UG)-2022 has been given to the National Testing Agency, an independent organisation, established under the Ministry of Education

INFRA BOOST



Transport Minister Padmanabha Behera inaugurated the office of Bus Owners' Association in Baramunda area of Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Chilika MLA's interim bail extended

AGENCIES

Cuttack, May 4: The Orissa High Court Wednesday allowed the extension of interim bail of Chilika MLA Prasanta Jagadev on health grounds. The legislator was arrested on charges of ploughing his SUV into a crowd.

According to Jagadev's counsel Abhinab Chand, the court has directed to extend the MLA's interim bail for seven more days - till May 11.

After Jagadev's interim bail ended Tuesday, the Chilika MLA's lawyer appeared before the Banapur JMFC court Wednesday and produced a memo of High Court's directive in the court.

On April 22, the Orissa High Court had granted seven-day interim bail to Jagadev.

On March 12 Jagadev was head-

ing towards Banpur block for the block chairperson election when he had to stop due to heavy rush in front of the block office. Instead of slowing down the vehicle, Jagadev allegedly drove it into the crowd. At least 22 people were injured in the incident.

The infuriated mob then attacked the MLA and also vandalised the vehicle. A severely injured Jagadev was initially admitted to a hospital in Banpur and later shifted to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar.

He was arrested after his discharge from the hospital. Jagadev has been charged with serious offences like attempt to murder, obstructing police personnel from performing their duty, injuring public and using car as weapon to hurt people.

B12 deficiency in kids is huge yet overlooked problem: Study

A lack of vitamin B12 doesn't just potentially lead to anaemia, it can damage the nervous system. And for young children, B12 is crucial for brain development

Vitamin B12 deficiency in infants leads to poor motor development and anaemia, according to a study which stated that its deficiency is an enormous yet overlooked problem.

For many years, there has been a focus on vitamin A, zinc and iron deficiencies when it comes to malnutrition across the globe, whereas there is a paucity of research on B12 deficiency.

A lack of vitamin B12 doesn't just potentially lead to anaemia, it can damage the nervous system. And for young children, B12 is crucial for brain development.

"B12 deficiency is one of the most overlooked problems out there when it comes to malnutrition. And unfortunately, we can see that the food relief we provide today is not up to the task," said Henrik Friis, first author of the study and a professor at the University of Copenhagen's Department of Nutrition, Exercise and Sports.

A team from University of Copenhagen and Doctors Without Borders conducted a study among 1,000 children with acute malnutrition aged 6-23 months in Africa's Burkina Faso.

The results, published in the journal PLOS Medicine, showed



a strong correlation between vitamin B12 deficiency and poor motor development and anaemia.

The children's B12 levels were measured both before and after three months of daily food relief

rations containing the recommended B12 content. During the period when children were provided with food relief, their B12 levels increased, before decreasing considerably once the pro-

gramme was stopped.

Even after three months of food relief, one-third of the children continued to have low or marginal levels of B12 stored.

The unfortunate explanation is that there is a cap on how much B12 can be absorbed.

"A child's gut can only absorb 1 microgram of B12 per meal. So, if a child is lacking 500 micrograms, it will take much longer than the few weeks that they have access to emergency food relief," explained Vibeke Brix Christensen, paediatrician and medical advisor with Doctors Without Borders.

She points out that it might make a difference to divide the necessary amount of vitamin B12 across several meals, which would probably allow children to absorb the same amount of B12 each time.

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BRAHMANI'S CRY FOR SURVIVAL

SPCB's spl drainage plan to curb pollution falls flat



As per the proposal, a drain that would be constructed in Duburi area will pass through the riparian pockets of Kharasrota upto Marthapur...

lution issues. The petitioners had made the then chief secretary, the secretaries of the industries, mines, water resources, forest and environment departments, chairpersons of the CPCB and SPCB, collectors of Jharsuguda, Jajpur, Angul and Keonjhar parties to the case.

The HC in its order had sought measures to make Brahmani and its distributaries pollution free. Thereafter, the SPCB had taken a decision to set up water treatment plants at four riparian pockets of Brahmani and Kharasrota.

In June 2016, Jharsuguda MLA Naba Kisore Das (now the health minister) had raised a question in the Assembly about online monitoring of Brahmani pollution. Four industries had been suggested to install online monitoring equipment on their nearby river banks.

area will pass through the riparian pockets of Kharasrota upto Marthapur. An effluent treatment plant (ETP) would be set up at the tail end of the drain. Ironically, the proposal has been in pen and paper only.

There used to be many streams flowing from Badasuni hill via Kalinganagar area. The water of these streams gets accumulated on the premises of some industrial units as constructions come up on these water channels. The stream water gets mixed with various toxic chemicals used by industries. The industries drain out such water from their premises following which the water falls in Ganda Nullah and finally reaches Brahmani and Kharasrota rivers.

Tests of Brahmani water had earlier confirmed the presence of harmful substances like cyanide and phenolic compounds.

Locals from various villages had staged protests in 2015 and moved a PIL in the High Court over the pol-

Jajpur, May 4: An ambitious plan by Kalinganagar regional office of Odisha State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) to create a special drainage system to ward off pollution in Brahmani river has fallen flat.

The proposal of the SPCB came up when a report based on laboratory tests of the water samples of the state's second largest river was published in the media. Industrial effluent discharged from Kalinganagar industrial area finds way to Ganda Nullah and finally pollutes Brahmani and its distributary Kharasrota.

Although four years have passed since the plan was mooted in 2018, no step was taken by the SPCB on this drainage project, which is necessary for checking pollution in the Brahmani river and its distributary.

As per the proposal, a drain that would be constructed in Duburi

SHORT TAKES

Elderly man killed over sorcery

Thakurmunda: An elderly man was hacked to death by a co-villager on suspicion of practising sorcery at Chheratangara under this police limits in Mayurbhanj district Wednesday.

College girl kidnapped

Jeypore: A complaint was lodged at Jeypore police station Wednesday alleging abduction of a girl student of Borigumma College in Koraput district. According to police, the minor girl has gone missing since April 26 when she had gone to the college.

Trader attacked, robbed of ₹3L

Kamakhyanager: Bike-borne miscreants Wednesday assaulted a trader with a sharp weapon and decamped with Rs 3 lakh from him near Ghodadian nullah under Pandua police outpost here in Dhenkanal district.

Diarrhoea claims 2 in Ganjam

Hinjilicut, May 4: Two persons died while several others were taken ill of diarrhoea and vomiting at Khasapa village under Shergarh block in Ganjam district, a report said Wednesday.

The deceased were identified as Chitrasen Swain, 39, of Badadanda Sahi and Champa Dalei, 58, of Swarneswar Sahi in the village. Chitrasen died Tuesday while Champa succumbed to the ailment Sunday.

After reports surfaced, a medical team from Shergarh hospital visited the village and conducted a health check-up of the villagers before distributing oral rehydration salt (ORS) and medicines to the villagers.

Basant Naik, 27 and Maheswar Biswal, 25, of Harijan Sahi have been admitted to Hinjilicut sub-divisional hospital while Babu Moharana of Swarneswar Sahi and Sulu Acharya of Thurbubal have been shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital after their condition worsened.

A local said the villagers fell ill after consuming food at a marriage party hosted in the village four days back. He rejected the allegation that the disease spread due to water contamination as the villagers drink piped water.

₹3.98cr fine for illegal sand mining

Lahunipada, May 4: Cracking a whip on illegal sand mining from Brahmani river under this tehsil of Sundargarh district, the administration has imposed a penalty of ₹3.98 crore on a lessee engaged in the illegal act at Kenapalli ghat of the river.

According to reports, locals had earlier moved the National Green Tribunal (NGT) alleging that sand is being lifted illegally near Kenapalli village. The NGT had formed a five-member investigation team for a probe into the alleged illegality and sought a report within four weeks.

Such illegal act was strongly opposed by people of Kenapalli, Ladam, Thakurpalli, Kumbhardihi, Ulsarei and Jodibandh. However, the lease holder did not care a fig about people's concern.

Locals further alleged that the lease holder had used earthmover and other heavy equipment to lift sand from the riverbed, which was in blatant violation of various terms and conditions laid down for minor mineral exploration.

Following an NGT order, a team of officials of Forest and Environment department, a senior scientist from Bhubaneswar, the district magistrate, the deputy director of mining (Koida circle) had carried out on-the-spot inquiry about violation of environment norms, revenue loss due to excess mining, extent of damage done to the environment and restoration of the riverbed.

Based on the investigation report, the NGT has asked the lease holder to pay ₹3.98 crore as penalty.

of conducting excessive sand mining. Such illegal act was strongly opposed by people of Kenapalli, Ladam, Thakurpalli, Kumbhardihi, Ulsarei and Jodibandh. However, the lease

DEMO AGAINST SCHOOL MERGER



Guardians and students under the aegis of Ganjam Zilla Vidyalaya Suraksha Committee staged a demonstration outside the Collectorate in Chhatrapur Wednesday demanding cancellation of closure and merger of schools. They also sought reopening of the closed schools

Traders fleece kendu leaf pluckers

SOME UNREGISTERED AGENCIES ARE PROCURING KENDU LEAVES FROM THE PLUCKERS DUE TO LACK OF GOVT INTERVENTION

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, May 4: Kendu leaf pluckers in this district are being taken for a ride by the middlemen and traders due to lack of coordination between Forest and Panchayati Raj departments, as per a report.

They are allegedly not being paid their remuneration in time and are suffering in silence. The middlemen and traders are reaping the advantage of this laxity to exploit the gullible leaf pluckers.

According to sources, the state government has fixed the price of per bundle of kendu leaves at ₹2.80 and a bonus of ₹1.40.

This apart, the government has announced various labour welfare measures for the benefit of these pluckers.

However, these benefits are not reaching them due to lack of awareness among the pluckers and the apathetic attitude of the administrative authorities.

Agencies engaged in Padia, Kalimela, MV-79 and Salimi areas are collecting kendu leaves at their will and not paying money in time despite provision of depositing wages in the bank account of the pluckers the very next day. Earlier, there were instances of traders purchasing the leaves from the



pluckers on credit and later conveniently forgetting to pay them their remuneration.

Locals alleged that many of the traders change the name of their firm and logo after defrauding the pluckers. There are some agencies who are procuring kendu leaves without having valid registration. A local sarpanch has alleged that some unregistered agencies are procuring kendu leaves in Salimi panchayat under Mathili forest range.

When contacted, divisional forest officer (DFO), Kendu leaf, Bibhuti Bhusan Behera said action will be taken and stocks will be seized if such agencies were found to have procured kendu leaf illegally and transporting them for sale. He said he has discussed this issue with the DFO of

FOCUS MALKANGIRI

The state govt has fixed the price of per bundle of kendu leaves at ₹2.80 and a bonus of ₹1.40

This apart, the govt has announced various labour welfare measures for the benefit of the kendu leaf pluckers

These benefits are not reaching them due to lack of awareness among the pluckers and the apathetic attitude of the administrative authorities

Malkangiri. District panchayat officer Jugal Nayak said he is yet to receive any complaint but assured of action if someone files a complaint on the alleged illegality. Sub-Collector Akshaya Kemundu also assured of action if such agencies or persons are found to have violated government norms.

6-ft croc rescued from Similipal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baripada, May 4: A three-year-old mugger crocodile was rescued Wednesday from a pond in Mayurbhanj district, forest officials said.

During fishing in the morning, the 6-ft long crocodile was caught by the villagers at Bholagaria foothills of Similipal in Udala range of Baripada forest division. A team of forest officials visited the spot for the rescue. The reptile was treated for its injuries sustained during fishing, Baripada DFO Santosh Joshi said.

Later, it was released inside the Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary. The species are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act and specified as vulnerable in the International Union for Conservation of Nature's red list of threatened species.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Advertisement for East Coast Railway tender. Includes details like 'Name of Work: JARAPADA-BUDHAPANK 3RD & 4TH LINE: SUPPLY AND STACKING OF 50000 CUM MACHINE CRUSHED TRACK BALLAST AS PER RAILWAY'S SPECIFICATION AT ANGUL DEPOT FROM OUTSIDE RAILWAY LAND / QUARRY AND LOADING INTO RAILWAY'S WAGON IN CONNECTION WITH JARAPADA-BUDHAPANK 3RD & 4TH LINE WITH FLY OVER AT TALCHER ROAD.'

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Social media abuzz with 'Justice for Nishant'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, May 4: The mysterious death of a first year MBBS student Nishant Kumar, 19, at Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital (BBMCH) here has kicked up a storm in social media as ragging is alleged to be the reason behind the incident, a report said.

Family members of the deceased from Karnal in Haryana have launched a campaign called 'Justice for Nishant Kumar' on social media platforms seeking justice for the deceased and demanding a ban on ragging in educational institutions.

The campaign is slowly gaining traction. Nishant's father Prof Krishna Kumar has also tweeted to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) seeking justice for his deceased son. Intellectuals claimed that ragging of junior students by their seniors is tarnishing the image of the premier institute which has been established here after yearlong efforts to impart medical education to the students. They have been de-

DEATH AT BBMCH

manding a thorough probe into the mystery behind the death which they think would go a long way in restoring the image of the institution.

Meanwhile, a delegation from Delhi met BBMCH authorities and held discussions with them. Effort to contact the Dean, Dr Sabita Mohapatra, on her mobile phone for her response failed to yield any result. Family members have been alleging that Nishant died due to severe ragging by the senior students of the medical college. A mobile chatting of the deceased has buttressed the allegations, said a source.

Reports said a five-member team of students of another medical college in the state visited the BBMCH to invite its students for Medifest in their college. The team members stayed in the hostel meant for first year students. During their stay, they taught the fourth year students how to do ragging of the junior students and the newcomers. Later, the fourth year students ganged up and tortured Nishant.

FOCUS SOCIETY

SAVE MINORITY LANGUAGES



The fact is that many local languages are on the verge of extinction and such a loss would have an adverse impact on age old traditions and cultures

India is a diverse country where many languages and dialects are spoken. According to a report of the 2011 Census, there are around 19,500 languages or dialects spoken. Only 22 of these are recognised in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution as official languages. There is no national language, although a section believes that 'Hindi' is. Recently, actor Ajay Devgn created a controversy when he tweeted that Hindi is the national language. UP Minister Sanjay Nishad, supremo of NISHAD party, claiming to represent the communities of fishermen and boatmen and an ally of BJP, said, as reported in the media, that those who don't speak Hindi should leave the country! When it is very clear in the Constitution that there is no national language, then why do some public figures keep saying that "Hindi is the national language"? First of all, let's agree that Hindi is the most popular language and is the most understood one in the country. Although in the 2011 Census around 44% identified Hindi as their mother tongue, there is also a section which understands Hindi, despite the fact that it isn't their mother tongue. However, this doesn't give the language a national status. Trust our politicians not to lose an opportunity to woo and strengthen their vote bank, even if it means joining the bandwagon of the language debate without understanding its intricacies. That's the reason that a politician from the Hindi belt doesn't even think twice before saying that those who don't speak Hindi are 'foreigners'. Then there are politicians from the South to convey the message, as loudly as possible, that the imposition of Hindi is completely wrong and they are proud speakers of Tamil or Malayalam or Telugu or Kannada, depending on the state of that politician. How can politicians from West Bengal stay away from such debates which automatically provide them a platform "to show how much they love Bengali?" India is a land of many languages and this tradition has to be preserved, and no language should be imposed on any state or any region. But unfortunately for politicians the row triggered by the language debate is more often seen as an opportunity to polarise voters by keeping them away from real issues that threaten their electoral prospects. The ultimate aim is to win elections by painting a language as an evil, and this "evil language" varies from states to regions. This is not to say that no language faces any issue in this country. For example, say the Assamese language, one of the 22 official languages. The last Census in 2011 revealed that only 48% of Assam's population speaks Assamese, meaning that it is no longer spoken by the majority. This is definitely a matter of concern. Apart from the 22 official languages, there are many other languages or dialects which are fighting for their existence. Sadly in the debate of language politics, these don't find a mention. One such language is Bishnupuriya Manipuri, the mother tongue of this writer. The

speakers are largely concentrated in Assam, particularly in Barak Valley and Tripura, apart from a few districts of Manipur like Jiribam. Although the Left Front government in Tripura then introduced the Bishnupuriya Manipuri language at primary levels in areas dominated by the community in the state in 1995, it wasn't introduced in Assam then. This led to protests called the Bishnupuriya Manipuri Bhasa Andolan in 1996 in the Barak Valley where a young woman activist, Sudeshna Sinha, sacrificed her life, as a result of police firing, for the recognition of her mother tongue. The date was March 16, commemorated every year by the Bishnupuriya Manipuri community. Later in 2001, the Assam government finally introduced Bishnupuriya Manipuri at primary levels in areas of the Barak Valley where the community dominates. Yet the language still faces many difficulties. A major issue is that in the Census the name of the community isn't properly represented. Instead of Bishnupuriya Manipuri, the Census has identified Bishnupuriya as a 'language', upsetting the community. Umpteen demands have been made by their organisations to rectify this mistake. Then there are Nepali-speaking Gorkhas in Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal who have often raised their voice against the imposition of Bengali and demanding recognition of their language. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who otherwise is very vocal against imposition of Hindi in her state, has been criticised by the Gorkhas for doing the same to them. Then there are regional and tribal languages such as Gondi, Chhattisgarhi, Garo, Kokborok, Kamatapuri, Bhojpuri, Lepcha, Mizo, Ho, Angika and many others, which seek inclusion in the Eighth Schedule. If Hindi is made compulsory in the present three language policy, other than English, an important language, it is likely to be challenging for minority languages. For example, in Tripura, if this policy is introduced, it is likely to leave no space for Kokborok, the language of the majority of tribals, as the third language would be Bengali, the state's dominant language. This is likely to create resentment among tribals. In my old village school, three languages are taught - Bengali, English and Sanskrit. There is a fourth - Bishnupuriya Manipuri but only for students of the community. If Hindi, a language already the most popular and which doesn't need to be imposed, is introduced, one language has to be replaced. Is learning Sanskrit, another endangered language and a key to India's ancient treasure of knowledge, not important? Or is learning Bishnupuriya Manipuri not significant for its community? The fact is that many local languages are on the verge of extinction and such a loss would have an adverse impact on age old traditions and culture, among others. The language debate should focus on larger and critical issues. Let's not turn Hindi versus others into yet another vote bank politics. Can there be restraint before it damages the diverse social fabric? INFA



Sagarneel Sinha

THE LANGUAGE DEBATE SHOULD FOCUS ON LARGER AND CRITICAL ISSUES. LET'S NOT TURN HINDI VERSUS OTHERS INTO YET ANOTHER VOTE BANK POLITICS



Ian Buruma

After all, the liberal center cannot rely on urban elites alone

Why's Macron Hated?

France is not the United States. Many liberals, including me, worried that Marine Le Pen might just win the French presidency for the same reason that Donald Trump defeated Hillary Clinton in 2016: Loathing of the more liberal candidate would enable the far-right populist to squeak through. Fortunately, enough people who dislike President Emmanuel Macron held their noses and voted for him in the second-round runoff in order to thwart Le Pen. If one must choose between cholera and the plague, many voters stated, then the former was clearly the better option. Macron himself acknowledged as much in his victory speech, stating that, "To all those who voted for me, not in support of my ideas but to block the far right from winning, your vote obligates me." But the fact that 41.5% of voters chose Le Pen, a candidate who represents a deeply reactionary, nativist, and illiberal strain in French politics, is still worrying enough. Why, then, do so many people hate Macron? The reasons French voters give for rejecting Macron are similar to those cited by US voters who could not bear Hillary Clinton. They are the candidate's perceived arrogance, entitlement, aloofness, and - as with Clinton's infamous "basket of deplorables" remark about Trump supporters - a history of insulting less educated people with conservative views. True, Clinton lacked the common touch, unlike her husband, former US President Bill Clinton. And Macron can come across as being contemptuous of anyone who stands in his way. But while personality counts in democratic politics, individual quirks do not explain everything. The visceral aversion to Clinton and Macron also reflects deeper social fissures resulting from shifts in party politics that began decades ago. Political parties used to be held together by class-based economic interests. The left, closely linked to trade unions, represented the interests of the industrial working class, and the right spoke for small and big business. Liberal democratic systems worked because these parties held each other in balance. It was clear what they stood for, and most voters felt that they had a stake in the fortunes of one side or the other. This began to change in the 1980s, when the left started drifting away from economic, class-based interests toward social and cultural issues such as anti-racism, gender and sexual emancipation, and multiculturalism. Trade unions were weakened, especially in the US and the UK, by deindustrialisation, and their links with socialist and social-democratic parties began to fray. The left became more popular with educated and relatively well-off urban voters, many of whom disliked organised religion and opposed various kinds of social conservatism, such as racial prejudice. The big mistake these left-wing elites made was to assume that the working class, urban or rural, would naturally share their 'progressive' social and cultural ideals. In fact, many people who would classify themselves as working class are conservative. Religion thrives among the poor. Immigrants are often perceived as a threat to their jobs. Gay rights do not rank high on their list of concerns. And this is not just true of white voters. In the US, many Latinos, and even Black people, now vote for the Republican Party. The left's shift away from class-based politics began in the union-busting era of UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and US President Ronald Reagan, and became even more apparent after the collapse of communism in the Soviet bloc. In the West, the need to balance free-market economics with moderate redistribution was no longer regarded as an urgent priority. Even the UK's formerly socialist Labour Party under Tony Blair, and the US Democratic Party under Bill Clinton, became keen promoters of the neoliberal policy agenda. Yet, if socially and culturally conservative rural voters and the urban working class felt increasingly alienated from center-left parties, they did not necessarily find the traditional pro-business center-right hospitable, either. For a long time, the so-called 'country-club' Republican elite in the US would pay lip service to the conservative views of mostly white, blue-collar voters without college degrees by stirring up racial fears and promoting 'Christian values.' But, once elected, these Republicans would turn their attention to business as usual. Many working-class voters thus felt betrayed by both the left, which they thought no longer represented their economic interests and despised their social attitudes, and the right, which took no notice of them once it was in power. Both Trump and Macron exploited this opening. Trump took over the Republican Party and turned it into a populist cult, while Macron blew up France's center-left and center-right parties and replaced them with himself. Both men promised that they alone could fix their country's problems, as though they were latter-day absolute monarchs. But Macron has a problem. Le Pen and Trump grew up in Paris and New York, respectively, with far greater wealth than Macron, but they share and understand the resentments of people who hate educated elites. Although Macron comes from France's provincial middle class, he climbed his way into the upper class and assumed the superior attitudes of the old left-wing and right-wing political parties that he helped to destroy. That is why he must rely on the votes of older, highly educated people in big cities. The old French working class supports either the far-left leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon or Le Pen. Rural voters prefer Le Pen. And the young are on the far left or do not vote. We should feel relieved that enough French voters managed to stave off disaster. But Macron was right to temper any sense of triumph, and also to voice his obligation to those who dislike his policies but still voted for him. Many French voters feel abandoned, and Macron needs to take their interests seriously. After all, the liberal center cannot rely on urban elites alone. Let us hope that US Democrats are paying attention.

You must abstain from thinking about someone when you cannot think well of him. THE MOTHER

The writer is the author, most recently, of *The Churchill Complex: The Curse of Being Special, From Winston and FDR to Trump and Brexit* (Penguin, 2020). ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- That it will never come again is what makes life sweet. EMILY DICKINSON
- Change alone is eternal, perpetual, immortal. ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER
- Energy and persistence conquer all things. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

WORDSWORTH

Stramonium
This is a modern Latin word of uncertain origin, which perhaps derives from a dialectal variation of the Tartar turman, meaning a horse medicine. It identifies a mixture of alkaloids such as atropine and hyoscyamine that were at one time used as a narcotic drug. The Greeks knew of its hallucinogenic and disinhibiting effects. Stramonium was extracted from the leaves and flowering tops of the thornapple (Datura stramonium), a narcotic plant better known in the US as devil weed or jimsonweed because it poisoned colonists at the early settlement of Jamestown in Virginia (jimson being a corruption of Jamestown). The drug was in the British Pharmacopoeia for centuries as a drug with narcotic and hypnotic effects and had an honourable place there in the treatment of asthma right up to the end of the Second World War; it is still used in homeopathic medicine. It has also been used by various peoples as an hallucinogen.

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Climate leadership needs more women

The higher you go, the fewer women there are." This observation by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and environmental trailblazer Wangari Maathai, reflects a reality familiar to all women who have aspired to leadership positions, and it has gained a new meaning for me as the climate crisis has intensified. Though it is already clear that women and girls will face higher risks and greater burdens because of climate change, they remain significantly under-represented in climate and environmental negotiations. In 2019, the UN Gender Composition Report noted that the number of women represented in UN Framework Convention on Climate Change bodies was not in line with efforts to create gender balance. In response, member states adopted a gender action plan at the COP25 in 2019. The plan recognised that "full, meaningful, and equal participation and leadership of women in all aspects of the UNFCCC process and in national- and local-level climate policy and action is vital for achieving long-term climate goals." And yet, by the time COP26 rolled around two years later, little had changed. The UK's COP26 presidency was predominantly male-led, and just 11 of the 74 African national representatives were women. Moreover, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity appears to be exhibiting a similar tendency with male negotiators outnumbering

women negotiators by around 60. The failure to ensure equal representation and women's participation in efforts to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss is short-sighted, at best, and potentially reckless. The problem is also increasingly urgent. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has documented unequivocally that human activities are warming our planet's surface, leading to rapidly changing weather systems, biodiversity loss, and increased resource insecurity. Women comprise the majority of the world's poor and are disproportionately affected by these crises. In the developing world, they are overwhelmingly responsible for sourcing food and water for their families, and they often take the lead in fuel collection and household management. As such, women and girls are often the first to experience the harsh realities of climate change. But, owing to pervasive inequalities that limited their access to education and healthcare, unequal employment rates, and low rates of representation in public office, they are less likely than men to be able to participate in decision-making processes. If the last two years have shown us anything, it is that women's leadership is critical in tumultuous times. According to a recent study of 194 countries, the immediate responses to COVID-19 were systematically better in countries with

campaign to protect 30% of the world's surface by 2030. Meeting this objective would prevent further ecosystem destruction, and the effort could lead to the first-ever global agreement to halt the destruction of nature. Many more women are tackling biodiversity loss and climate change, including indigenous women who are using their unique knowledge of the land to farm more sustainably and protect fragile ecosystems, and aspiring politicians running on integrated policy platforms linking reproductive health, education, and environmental protection. Much has changed since 2004, when Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize for her contributions to sustainable development, democracy, and peace. Emissions have surged, and extreme weather events have increased in frequency and intensity. But much has also stayed the same: women continue to be excluded from leadership positions, and the world continues to pay the price for it. As the final negotiations for the new Global Biodiversity Framework continue, and as we approach this year's CBD COP15 in Kunming, China, we have a duty to address these failures. If we don't bring more women to the table, a climate disaster is almost certainly guaranteed.



Yvonne Aki-Sawyer

IF WE DON'T BRING MORE WOMEN TO THE TABLE, A CLIMATE DISASTER IS ALMOST CERTAINLY GUARANTEED

The writer is Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone.

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Letters

Musk's Twitter deal
Sir, After nearly a month of ups and downs, including a hostile takeover offer, Elon Musk has finally become the new owner of Twitter by spending \$44bn. Musk calls himself a "free speech absolutist," and has declared that "free speech is the bedrock of a functioning democracy, and Twitter is the digital town square where matters vital to the future of humanity are debated." Twitter is not the world's largest social media platform. Then what is the reason that the world's richest person got so interested in this platform that he is even ready to sell his Tesla stocks. For Musk, Twitter is not just a social media platform, it's a marketing tool, where he can promote his products in various ways. Now the question is why Twitter not any other platform? Because he's active on this platform, and he has more than 80 million followers. Whenever he lunches a new product, retweets, likes and comments result in an engagement of more than 500 to 600 million people. Musk always makes the most out of it. And that is the reason he keeps on posting something interesting on Twitter. So, Musk is one step forward to capture the elite class, global political leaders and the global market through Twitter. Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Perils of plastic
Sir, Experts are not tired of advocating against the use of plastic and also educating the people about the perils abounding the use of it. When products made of plastic are available in the market for sale, people do not hesitate to buy such products and use them. Ban on use of plastic goods makes little sense without banning the manufacture and sale of them. Plastic is an insoluble item. Only nine per cent of plastic ever created is said to have been recycled. There is the apprehension that the remaining 91 per cent have found their way into the ocean resulting in irreparable damage to marine ecosystems, and choking and polluting rivers. In domestic functions, water is supplied in plastic bottles. Plastic bottles are being used at homes for drinking water and the use of steel cups is being gradually phased out by the current generation. The more experts are sensitising the people against the use of plastic, the more it is being used in public and private functions as well as at home. Advice against the use of plastic goods without banning the manufacturing activities is an exercise in futility. KV Seetharamaiah, BANGALORE

of the day quote

Infrastructure is not just about creating capital assets and generating long-term return on investment. It is not about the numbers. It is not about the money. It is about people. It is about providing them high quality, dependable, and sustainable services in an equitable manner. People must be at the heart of any infrastructure growth story. And, that is exactly what we in India are doing

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

BJP is an anti justice party in the country. Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai has denied in writing that the caste based census will not take place in the country. In that context, we will not allow any census to take place in Bihar

TEJASHWI YADAV | RJD LEADER

With few months to go for the HP polls, the CM of Himachal Pradesh is now going from one place to another, doing inauguration of projects, and telling people what his government will do if voted to power. He should seek votes on the basis of what has been done by the government

SATYENDAR JAIN | SENIOR AAP LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Curfew lifted in Khargone

Bhopal/Khargone: The administration in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone lifted the curfew with immediate effect Wednesday evening, 24 days after it was imposed following violence during a Ram Navami procession April 10, an official said. The prohibitory orders and all other restrictions were also removed, he said.

PoK national repatriated

Jammu: The Indian Army Wednesday handed over a civilian to Pakistan authorities who had inadvertently crossed the Line of Control (LoC) in J&K's Rajouri district. Defence sources said that the Army repatriated the civilian from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) Tuesday. "Mehmood Hussain son of Shah Wali of village Kotli had inadvertently crossed over to the Indian side from Manjakot tehsil April 28. The area is under operational supervision of Bhimber Gali Brigade," sources said.

Cov: Positivity rate worries K'taka govt

Bangalore: Even though Karnataka recorded the lowest number of Covid deaths in April since the virus struck first in 2020, the state is recording a rise in the positivity rate (1.50 %). Five people died from the Covid infections in April as per the statistics released by the state health department. In March, the positivity rate stood around 0.53 %. In the first week of April it came down to 0.38 %, second week registered 0.56 %, third week it rose to 0.79 % and by end of April the Covid positivity rate touched 1.19 %.

Jawan killed in encounter

Narayanpur: A District Reserve Guard (DRG) head constable was killed in an encounter with Naxals in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Narayanpur district Wednesday. The skirmish took place around 8.15 am at a forest in Tulargufa-Mungari area under Chhotodongar police station limits when a joint team of various security forces was out on a search operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraj P told PTI.



Bodo has been declared as the official language of the state and the protection and promotion of a language is the responsibility of both the society and the government. I urge Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to make all possible efforts in this direction

RAM NATH KOVIND | PRESIDENT

PENSIONS DELAYED

The disbursement of pensions to 58,275 defence pensioners was delayed this month as their banks could not confirm their identification by April 30, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said Wednesday. In order to avoid hardship, a one-time special waiver has been accorded to these 58,275 pensioners to get their identification done by May 25, it said



Gangrape victim allegedly raped by SHO in PS, cop held



An FIR has been registered under provisions of the Indian Penal Code, POCSO Act and SC/ST Act. Opposition targeted the Yogi Adityanath-led BJP govt over the incident

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lalitpur/Prayagraj (UP), May 4: A Station House Officer was arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl who was left outside his police station in Uttar Pradesh's Lalitpur by four men after they raped her for three days, officials said Wednesday.

The SHO was arrested from an area near the Allahabad High Court, they said, adding that five others, including the girl's aunt and the four men who had lured her to Bhopal and raped her, have been arrested. All the other policemen of the Pali station in Lalitpur district have been taken away from active duty and sent to police lines.

Police sources said the girl was lured to Bhopal, about 240 km from Lalitpur, by four men who allegedly

raped her for three days and then left her near the police station.

SHO Tilakdhari Saroj handed the victim over to her aunt but later on the pretext of recording her statement, called her again to the police station and allegedly raped her on its premises, they said.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Jhansi, Jyendra Kumar has been asked to probe the matter and submit the report within 24 hours, officials said.

The DIG has been told to stay in Lalitpur till the case is solved, ADG (Law and Order) Prasant Kumar said in Lucknow.

The National Human Rights Commission also issued notices to UP chief secretary and the Director General of Police and asked them to submit a report in this regard within four weeks.

A senior police official said since the SHO was absconding, first a man close to him was arrested and his intense questioning, the accused officer was nabbed.

As chilling details of the case came to light, the opposition Samajwadi Party, BSP and the Congress highlighted the vulnerability of women and asked where they should go to file their complaint and whom should they trust. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav also visited

Lalitpur and met the rape survivor at the district hospital. Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, however, said strict action will be taken and the stringent National Security Act will be slapped against the accused.

The parents of the victim are labourers.

The mother of the multiple-rape survivor also alleged that her daughter was taken to Bhopal by four men and raped there for three days after which they left her near the Pali police station, where she was again sexually attacked.

The girl narrated her ordeal during counselling at an NGO, which approached the superintendent of police. Following his intervention, an FIR was registered Tuesday.

Hitting out at the Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government over the incident, Samajwadi Party said in a tweet in Hindi, "The biggest question in the BJP government is whom to trust and whom to not. A minor who reached the police station to file rape complaint was raped by the SHO himself."

Hitting out at the state government in a series of tweets, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, "The incident of gangrape with a 13-year-old girl in Lalitpur and then rape by a police officer after taking a complaint shows how the real reforms of law and order are being suppressed under the noise of 'bulldozer'. If police stations are not safe for women, where will they go with their complaints?"

The police said an FIR was lodged under various sections of the IPC, including 363 (kidnapping), 376 (rape), 376 B (intercourse by public servant with woman in his custody), 120 B (conspiracy), POCSO Act and SC/ST Act.

MERCY PLEA TO PERARIVALAN

Can't shut our eyes: Apex court to Centre



Perarivalan had already served close to 30 years in prison. The court had passed judgments in favour of life convicts who have served over 20 years of their sentence

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 4: The Supreme Court Wednesday did not agree with the Centre's submission that court should wait for the President to take a call on the mercy plea of Rajiv Gandhi assassination convict AG Perarivalan.

A bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and B R Gavai said that it will place the matter for hearing and the decision of the President would not have any bearing on it, and it will examine the issue raised by the petitioner. Pointing out to the Centre's counsel that the question was whether the Governor had the authority to refer the mercy plea to the President, it noted that under Article 161 of the Constitution, the Governor was bound by the aid and advice given by the Tamil Nadu Council of Ministers. In September 2018, the Council of Ministers of Tamil Nadu had recommended Perarivalan's release. The Tamil Nadu Governor had

referred the Perarivalan's mercy plea to the President for a decision. The bench said the Governor had no authority to transfer the mercy plea to the President.

Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj, representing the Centre, contended that the Governor has referred the mercy plea to the President, and if the President refers it back to the Governor, then there is no need to discuss this issue at all. He added that the President will decide if the Governor could have referred the file to him or not.

But the bench said: "We will place the matter for hearing. The decision of the President will not have any bearing on us for sure".

As Nataraj urged the court to leave this decision - whether to pardon or reject, or if he decides to send the matter back to the Governor - to the President, the bench said: "We thought it was our duty to interpret the law and not the President's". Justice Rao told the Centre's counsel: "We cannot shut our eyes to something that is happening against the Constitution. We have to follow our Bible, the Constitution". The bench said the main question is, whether the Governor was correct in referring to the state Cabinet's wish to the President, rather than exercising his duty under Article 161, and this has to be decided by the court.

141 held so far for Jodhpur violence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, May 4: As many as 141 people have been arrested so far in connection with communal clashes over the hoisting of a flag before Eid in Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's constituency Jodhpur where a curfew continued for the second consecutive day Wednesday.

The situation is under control and no fresh incident of violence has been reported, police said. Nearly 1,000 police personnel have been deployed to maintain law and order.

Earlier, the authorities issued orders imposing a curfew till Wednesday midnight besides suspending mobile internet services. DGP M L Lather said 141 people have been arrested and 12 FIRs registered in Jodhpur.

Four FIRs were registered by police and eight lodged by people, he said.



He said nine policemen were injured in the violence. Tensions broke out the night intervening Monday and Tuesday over putting up of Islamic flags on the Jalori gate circle, which led to stone pelting.

The situation was brought under control in the early hours Tuesday with heavy deployment of police but tensions escalated again in the morning after prayers at an Eidgah close to the Jalori gate circle. Shops, vehicles and houses were pelted with stones near the Jalori gate area.

SC stays Haryana Civil Service (Judicial Branch) exam-2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 4: The Supreme Court Wednesday stayed the mains examination of Haryana Civil Service (Judicial Branch) - 2021 scheduled to commence from May 6 due to the clash with the Preliminary Exam of Madhya Pradesh Civil Judge, Junior Division (Entry Level) Exam - 2021.

A bench comprising Justices Vineet Saran and Justice J K Maheshwari passed the interim order and posted the matter for further hearing May 9.

"In our view, the petitioners have made out a prima facie case for grant of stay. In the aforesaid circumstances, as an interim measure, it is directed that the examinations of the Haryana Civil Services (Judicial Branch) Examinations scheduled for 6th to 8th May 2022 are stayed and shall be postponed."

"On the request of the learned counsel for the respondents, list May 9, by which date this Court would be informed of a fresh schedule for examinations to be notified by the respondents or else assist this Court enabling it to fix the postponed dates," the bench said.

RAIN WALK



People holding umbrellas take a stroll as rains in parts of the national capital bring respite from the heat in New Delhi. A hailstorm and a bout of rain in parts of Delhi Wednesday brought a much-needed respite from the tormenting heat

PTI PHOTO

ISRO plans mission to Venus, eyes Dec 2024 launch window

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 4: After sending missions to the Moon and Mars, the ISRO is now readying a spacecraft to orbit Venus to study what lies below the surface of the solar system's hottest planet, and also unravel the mysteries under the Sulfuric Acid clouds enveloping it.

Addressing a day-long meeting on Venusian science, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman S Somnath said the Venus mission has been conceived, a project report made and "money identified".

He urged scientists to focus on high-impact outcomes. "Building and putting a mission on Venus is possible for India in a very short space of time as the capability today exists with India," Somnath said in his inaugural address. The space agency is eyeing the

December 2024 window for its launch with orbital maneuvers planned for the following year when earth and Venus would be so aligned that the spacecraft could be put in the neighbouring planet's orbit using a minimum amount of propellant. The next similar window would be available in 2031. Somnath cautioned against repeating experiments conducted by previous missions to the Venus and focus on unique high-impact outcomes as were achieved by Chandrayaan-I and Mars Orbiter Mission. Among the experiments planned include an investigation of the surface processes and shallow sub-surface stratigraphy, including active volcanic hotspots and lava flows, studying the structure, composition, and dynamics of the atmosphere, and investigation of solar wind interaction with the Venusian Ionosphere.



Coronavirus particles found in air can spread infection: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, May 4: A new study has confirmed the airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2, concurring with previous studies that suggest that the concentration of the virus RNA is higher in indoor air as compared to outdoor spaces.

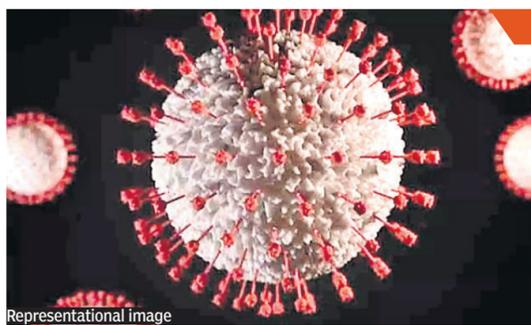
The collaborative study was conducted by a group of scientists from Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad and IMTech, Chandigarh, with hospitals in Hyderabad and Mohali, as per a CCMB report.

The study confirmed the airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2, after the scientists analysed the coronavirus' genome content from air samples collected from differ-

ent areas occupied by Covid-19 patients, including hospitals, closed rooms in which only coronavirus patients spent a short period of time, and houses of home-quarantined Covid-19 patients, it said.

The scientists found that the virus could be frequently detected in air around covid-19 patients and the positivity rate increased with the number of patients present in the premise.

They found the virus in ICU as well as non-ICU sections of hospitals, suggesting that patients shed the virus in air irrespective of the severity of infection. The study also found viable coronavirus in air that could infect living cells, and these viruses could spread over a long range of distance, it said.



Representational image

Scientists still suggested wearing face masks to avoid the spread of coronavirus. "Our results show that coronavirus can stay in the air for some time in absence of ven-

tilation in closed spaces. We find that the positivity rate of finding the virus in air was 75 per cent when two or more Covid-19 patients were present in a room, in contrast to 15.8

MASK MUST

As per the report, the exact mechanism of spread of coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 has remained elusive

Earlier thought to spread by surfaces, epidemiologists found that countries that wore masks in the pandemic were affected less severely

per cent when one or no Covid-19 patients occupied the room in these studies," said Shivranjani Moharir, scientist involved in the study. "Our observations are concurrent with previous studies that suggest that the concentration of SARS-CoV-2 RNA is higher in indoor air as compared to outdoor air; and in

indoor, it is higher in hospital and healthcare settings that host a larger number of Covid-19 patients, as compared to that in community indoor settings," Moharir said.

"As we are back to conducting in-person activities, air surveillance is a useful means to predict infection potential of a spaces like classrooms, meeting halls. This can help refine strategies to control the spread of infections," said Rakesh Mishra, the lead scientist of the work, and Director, Tata Institute for Genetics and Society.

He further said that the air surveillance technique is not just limited to coronavirus but can also be optimised to monitor other airborne infections. The study was published in the Journal of Aerosol Science.

NHRC notices to Maha, Jal Shakti Ministry over water crisis in a village

Families now hesitate to get their daughters married off to men from this village due to the water woes



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 4: The NHRC has issued notices to the Maharashtra government and the Union Jal Shakti ministry over reported acute water crisis in a Nasik village, which has forced women to walk long distances to fetch water, so much so that many new brides return to their parental homes unable to cope with the situation.

The NHRC has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report that due to acute shortage of water in Dandichi Bari village in Nasik district of Maharashtra, the villagers have to struggle daily for a drop of water, the statement said.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in its statement Wednesday said that women have to walk a kilometer and a half every summer, from March to June, to fetch water from a nearly dry stream at the bottom of a hill, which takes a lot of time.

Reportedly, families now hesitate to get their daughters married off to men from this village, it said.

The commission has observed that the content of the media report, if true, amounts to gross violation of their basic human rights that is right to life and dignity.

It seems that in spite of several efforts being made by government

agencies and announcement of various schemes to provide potable water, the relief is still away from this village, the rights panel said in the statement.

Accordingly, the NHRC has issued notices to the chief secretary, the government of Maharashtra and the secretary, Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, seeking detailed reports within six weeks.

The reports should include the steps being taken or proposed to be taken to redress the grievance of the residents of the village and present the status regarding availability of drinking water in the area, it said.

According to the media report, carried May 2, filling of one pot may take three hours and women have to walk on a hilly terrain in odd hours twice a day to fetch water first in the morning at 4am and again after sunset to avoid the scorching heat, the statement said.

New brides are often not able to cope with the horrible situation, according to the report. They are so daunted by the extreme water scarcity that they do not want to stay in the village and return to their maternal homes. The village sarpanch, reportedly said that many babus and journalists visit the village and take photographs of suffering of the villagers but no one helps, it said.

SPEED BREAKERS INSTALLED AT JUMBO CROSSING POINTS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 4: The Tamil Nadu forest department has installed 16 speed breakers at elephant crossing points in the Nilgiris to prevent the collision of vehicles with elephants.

Speed breakers have been installed along the National Highway connecting Mettupalayam to Coonoor and Udhamandalam.

The Madras High Court judges after visiting the Nilgiris area had recommended to the National Highways department to construct speed breakers to prevent collisions between vehicles and elephant herds crossing the road.

The judges had taken note of the fact that the constructions by the Salem railway division along the Coonoor ghat had blocked the movement of elephants.

This comes after the Judges of Madras HC visited the Nilgiris following a video of a herd of elephants finding it difficult to cross the road

An official from the National Highways wing while speaking to IANS said, "We have already installed 16-speed breakers at eight points and two more will be installed after the construction work of the road at the National Highways." Sadik Ali, conservationist, and founder Wildlife and Nature Conservation Trust welcomed the construction of speed breakers to prevent elephants being hit by vehicles.

Raj vows to drag 'anti-loudspeakers' campaign

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

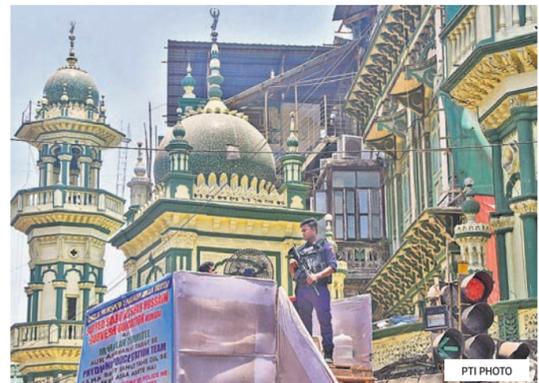
Mumbai, May 4: Claiming 90 per cent success on the first day of the anti-loudspeakers drive, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena President Raj Thackeray vowed to continue the campaign on a long-term basis till the issue resolved completely, here Wednesday.

A majority of the mosques in Mumbai and other parts of Maharashtra reportedly did not use the loudspeakers for the morning 'azan' call to the faithful, the MNS chief told mediapersons at his home.

"In Mumbai, there are 1,140 mosques... According to the reports I received since morning, only 135 sounded the 'azan' call on loudspeakers before 5 am, flouting the Supreme Court directives, Raj claimed.

He said that the issue is not limited to just one day since 'azan' is sounded five times daily and wondered why the Muslim clerics or religious leaders wanted to use loudspeakers for their prayers, disturbing all others in the vicinity.

"I reiterate... This is not a religious but a social issue. If anybody tries to give it a religious tone, then we shall be forced to do



Security personnel keep vigil outside Minar Masjid after MNS chief Raj Thackeray warned to play Hanuman Chalisa outside mosques, in Mumbai, Wednesday

likewise. We don't want disturbances or riots, but loudspeakers must go," Raj declared.

Targeting his cousin and Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray without taking his name, Raj demanded to know what action will be taken against these 135 mosques which allegedly violated the SC orders banning use of loudspeakers only between 10pm - 6am.

Taking umbrage at the police going after the MNS leaders and workers, he asked why they are being targeted for following the law while no action is taken against those who are flouting the laws.

"The Mumbai Joint Commissioner of Police Vishwas Nangare-Patil told me that a majority of the mosques have taken



I reiterate... This is not a religious but a social issue. If anybody tries to give it a religious tone, then we shall be forced to do likewise. We don't want disturbances or riots, but loudspeakers must go

RAJ THACKERAY | PRESIDENT, MAHARASHTRA NAVNIRMAN SENA

police permission. My question is that a majority of the mosques and loudspeakers in the state are illegal, so how can you give official

permission to such illegalities, and why for 365 days," Raj asked.

Shiv Sena leaders have lauded the people of Maharashtra for understanding the motives of the MNS leaders and maintaining peace and harmony today, and the Maharashtra Police for preventing untoward incidents.

Sena MoS Kishore Tiwari said that the misguided and mischievous campaign of MNS has been exposed as the masses have maintained peace and unity despite all provocations, thanks to the excellent police security arrangements.

Former Mumbai Mayor Kishore Pednekar questioned Raj's success claims and he was clearly misleading his partymen and others.

"A majority of the mosques have already implemented the rules for using loudspeakers even before the campaign. Why does the MNS target only non-Bharatiya Janata Party ruled states... They should go and do similar drives in the BJP-ruled states also," Pednekar demanded.

Raj thanked those mosques which have understood his views but maintained that the agitation will go on till all the loudspeakers in mosques across the state are silenced.

ANTILIA CASE

NIA: Pradeep Sharma plotted Hiran's cold-blooded murder



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, May 4: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has named dismissed police officer Pradeep Sharma as the 'main conspirator' in the "cold-blooded murder" of Thane businessman Mansukh Hiran, in its affidavit in the case pertaining to planting a SUV with 20 gelatin sticks outside Antilia, the home of industrialist Mukesh Ambani.

Aware of the entire conspiracy, the NIA told the Bombay High Court that Hiran was considered the 'weak link' in the larger conspiracy to terrorise the billionaire Ambani family, when the SUV was discovered February 25, 2021, sending shockwaves across the country.

Opposing the bail plea of Sharma - nabbed June 17, 2021 and currently in judicial custody - the NIA affidavit said he was not innocent and had committed offences of criminal conspiracy, murder and terror acts.

A division bench comprising Justice AS Chandurkar and Justice GA Sanap has kept Sharma's bail plea - challenging the Special NIA Court's rejection of his bail application in February 2022 - for further hearing July 17.

"Pradeep Sharma was an active

member of a gang that had conspired to terrorise people, including the Ambani family, and murdered Hiran as he was a weak link in the conspiracy

The larger conspiracy in the case involved parking of the SUV, and circulating threat letters in the name of 'Jaish-ul-Hind' to terrorise the Ambani family and local people

As the main conspirator, Sharma hired henchmen to kill Hiran by paying ₹45 lakhs he had got from Vaze, and after the murder, asked the co-accused to flee from Mumbai to Nepal

member of a gang that had conspired to terrorise people, including the Ambani family, and murdered Hiran as he was a weak link in the conspiracy," said the NIA, adding that Sharma and other accused were charged under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act for heinous and serious offences.

Hiran was aware of the entire conspiracy of parking the SUV outside Antilia that day and the

accused (Sharma and co-conspirator and sacked cop Sachin Vaze) feared that he (Hiran) could spill the beans making it difficult for the duo to gather the fruits of the larger plot.

The NIA said that from the evidence gathered, it was crystal clear that Sharma was directly involved in the crime and committed offences of conspiracy, terrorist act, being member of a terror gang, kidnapping, murder and destruction of evidence.

It said Sharma willingly and intentionally entered into a well-organised criminal conspiracy for the execution of Hiran which was a direct outcome of the terror acts committed by Vaze and the other accused.

The NIA also claimed that Hiran was eliminated after he refused to take the blame for parking the SUV outside Antilia.

The larger conspiracy in the case involved parking of the SUV, and circulating threat letters in the name of 'Jaish-ul-Hind' to terrorise the Ambani family and local people.

The NIA pointed out that after killing Hiran, the accused (Sharma-Vaze) attempted to show it as a suicide. Shockingly, Sharma had attended meetings in the Commissioner of Police premises where the alleged conspiracy was hatched.

As the main conspirator, Sharma hired henchmen to kill Hiran by paying ₹45 lakhs he had got from Vaze, and after the murder, asked the co-accused to flee from Mumbai to Nepal.

The NIA argued that Sharma was famous as an 'encounter specialist', influential and if released on bail, he would tamper with the evidence and influence the witnesses.

Governor has referred anti-NEET Bill to Centre for Prez's assent: Stalin



The Assembly had in February adopted the ruling DMK-piloted anti-NEET Bill for the second time, after the Governor had returned the one resolved last year

As part of our struggle for NEET exemption, in the next step, we should jointly take all efforts to insist the Centre for presidential assent for the Bill

MK STALIN | CHIEF MINISTER, TN

Chennai, May 4: The Tamil Nadu Assembly Bill seeking exemption to the state from the ambit of the National Entrance-cum-Eligibility Test (NEET) has been sent to the Centre for presidential assent by Governor RN Ravi, Chief Minister MK Stalin said Wednesday.

Stalin told the state Assembly that he has been informed by the Governor's secretary that the Bill has been sent to the Union Home Ministry to enable President Ram Nath Kovind's assent for the same.

"As part of our struggle for NEET exemption, in the next step, we should jointly take all efforts to insist the Centre for presidential assent for the Bill," he said.

The assembly had in February adopted the ruling DMK-piloted anti-NEET Bill for the second time, after the Governor had returned the one resolved last year.

Maintaining that the persistent efforts of his government led to the present development, the Chief Minister recalled the several steps he took in seeking NEET exemption and said immediately after the Governor returned the Bill, his government convened an all-party meet and discussed the issue.

The Bill was passed in the Assembly and sent to the Governor to be forwarded to the Centre for presidential assent.

Apart from personally calling on the Governor and urging him to forward the Bill to the Centre, he took up the issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. An all-party MP delegation met the President and submitted a memorandum in this regard, Stalin recalled. In continuation of these efforts, the Governor, in a historical move, has forwarded the Bill to the Union Home Ministry for presidential assent, the Chief Minister said.

Nilgiri summer festival to highlight TN tribal culture

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 4: The tribal culture of Tamil Nadu will be the highlight of the month-long Nilgiris festival to begin at Kottagiri from Saturday.

The festival, being held after a gap of two years due to Covid-19 pandemic, will showcase the unique tribal culture of Tamil Nadu.

In a statement Wednesday, the Nilgiris district administration said that there will be vegetable, flower and fruit stalls during the Nilgiris festival but separate stalls to highlight Tribal culture of the state and another stall on the Wild life of the state.

The district administration will be highlighting the use of cloth bags in the stalls during the festival and the festival area is banned for plastic and plastic products in a bid to create awareness of environment among the tourists.

A vegetable carving show highlighting the 200 years of Nilgiris will also be exhibited during the Nilgiris



fest, the statement said and the best vegetable carving will be given a prize.

The statement also said that a rose show will be held May 14 and 15 as part of the festival at the Government Rose Garden (GRG) and a spices show would be organised from May 13 to 15 at the Morning star school, Gudalur.

The flower show will be held at the Government Botanical Garden (GBG) from May 21 and the fruit

show will be held at Simspark May 28 and 29.

A wildlife photo exhibition highlighting the wildlife of Tamil Nadu will be held from May 7 to May 31 by the Nilgiris district forest department at the Horticulture auditorium, Charring cross.

The highlight of the entire show will be a detailed exhibition of the tribal culture of Tamil Nadu and the lifestyle of the tribal people, their food habits, medicinal plants they

Heavy tourist flow in Nilgiris

The tourist flow in Tamil Nadu's hill tourist destination of the Nilgiris has increased manifold after the opening up of the tourism spots in the state, post-Covid-19, officials said.

The Government Botanical Garden (GBG), Ooty received a record number of tourists, with state Horticulture Department telling IANS that 20,975 tourists visited it in the last 10 days and 10,274 the Government Rose Garden.

According to tour operators, resort owners, and cab operators, the tourist inflow after the popular tourist destination of Tamil Nadu was opened since Covid-19 was a welcome sign and the rev-

enue of the local people also has increased since the shutdown.

Talking to IANS, Selvaraj KS, a resort owner at Wellington, Ooty said, "This is a welcome sign and those who work in the tourism sector are having a jolly good time. It may be remembered that this was after two years of extreme pain and poverty that the market has opened up and the flow of tourists has increased in Ooty and Nilgiris."

He said that there are several foreign tourists also with the majority from the European countries. Selvaraj also said that local tourists from North Indian states and even from neighbouring Kerala are on the rise.

culture will be an educative one for the people who through the exhibition as the tribal life will be showcased here.

ANCIENT TERRACOTTA LAMP UNEARTHED IN TAMIL NADU

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 4: Excavations at Vembakottai in Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu have unearthed an ancient terracotta lamp, which according to archaeologists is an intrinsically decorated one.

Archaeologists who were part of the excavation told IANS that this was the first lamp that they have collected as a full and complete piece while fragments of such terracotta lamps were unearthed earlier.

Tamil Nadu state archaeology department has been carrying out exploration at Mettukadu in Vijayakaraisalkulam panchayat from March 14 onwards in four trenches. The fifth trench has commenced a few days ago and during then, the archaeologists found a terracotta lamp.

Pon Baskar, the excavation director from the state archaeology department, told IANS, "This is the first time a full lamp unearthed



from a trench and we are expecting more such materials in the coming days."

R Balachandran, a retired banker and an archaeology enthusiast told IANS I am an enthusiast of archaeology and have found some compelling evidence during my amateur studies. I have been relentlessly pursuing with the state government to order a detailed study at Mettukadu and now this has happened. The unearthing of a full-sized terracotta lamp is a treasure and in the days to come such treasures will be unearthed from this place.

of the day quote

With the completion of this project European style roads in Delhi will be a reality soon. This effort of the Kejriwal Government will also decongest city roads and enhance mobility along with making them beautiful

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

The AAP government of Delhi is blocking the release of Bhullar with the government's sentence review board not taking a decision in the matter. AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann owe an explanation on this count to the Sikh community

SUKHIBR SINGH BADAL | SAD PRESIDENT

The BJP is nervous. There, they are instigating riots. When BJP national president J P Nadda Sahab came to Sawai Madhopur even then I had said that he has come to set fire and the violence erupted in Karauli

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

PM Modi in Paris, to meet Macron

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached Paris Wednesday on the third and final leg of his visit to three European nations. He will be meeting President Emmanuel Macron during his brief stay and after that he will fly back to India. Modi flew to Paris from Copenhagen, where he participated in the second India-Nordic Summit along with his counterparts Mette Frederiksen (Denmark), Katrin Jakobsdottir (Iceland), Jonas Gahr Store (Norway), Magdalena Andersson (Sweden) and Sanna Marin (Finland).

Boys stripped for playing cards

Hyderabad: A group of boys was stripped and beaten up allegedly by three people for playing cards here, police said Wednesday. The incident happened at an isolated area Tuesday. The three local residents saw six boys in the age group of 10-12 playing cards and beat them up with plastic pipes after making them undress, they said.

7 held for auto driver's murder

Gurugram: With the arrest of seven persons, police claimed to have solved the murder of a 22-year-old auto driver. The victim Sumit Solanki was beaten to death Monday night by a group of 10-15 persons, the police said. Police said it was a case of a monetary dispute of Rs 1.50 lakh between one of the arrested accused Vishal alias Vicky and the deceased's elder brother Rohit Solanki that led to this murder. Those arrested have been identified as Vishal alias Vicky, Rahul alias Thakur, Nitesh alias Aakash, Anshul, Anubhav alias Guddu, Sonu Kumar and Himanshu.

Four minors drown in dam

Chhindwara (MP): Four minors, including two sisters, drowned while bathing in a dam located in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district Wednesday evening. The sisters, aged 9 and 11 years, and two boys, aged 7 and 10 years, drowned in the Machagora Dam, located some 40 km from the district headquarters under the Chourai police station area, at around 4 pm. All the deceased were residents of Bariyari village.



After 'One Rank, One Pension' deception, the Modi government is now adopting the policy of 'All Rank, No Pension'. Insulting the soldiers is an insult to the country. The government should give the pension of ex-servicemen at the earliest

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

BB SEEKS NOD FOR COVAXIN BOOSTER TRIALS FOR 2-18 AGE GROUP

Hyderabad-based vaccine manufacturer Bharat Biotech has sought permission to conduct booster dose trials of its Covid vaccine Covaxin for below 18 population



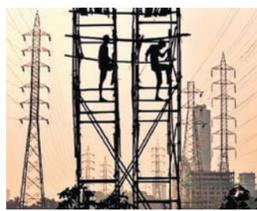
Maha, Raj, WB couldn't build up coal stocks due to pending dues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 4: Huge outstanding dues worth about Rs 7,918 crore of state-run power generating companies have resulted in less dispatch of coal especially to the states with high dues like Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal, according to an official note.

Several parts of the country are grappling with power outages on account of shortages of fossil fuel. "Total dues of state gencos are to the tune of Rs 7,918 crore. This has led to less dispatch of coal to states over the past many months. Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal could not build up stocks due to pending dues," according to a recent note to the cabinet secretary on the power supply situation. Moreover, Uttarakhand, Gujarat and Delhi, it said, have not made advance arrangements with their gas-based plants, which has affected about 4,000 mw capacity and has put more pressure on domestic coal.

Coal India Monday said its fuel supply to the power sector increased by 15.6 per cent in April 2022, compared to the same month



last year. It also stressed that it was planning to augment its dispatches further, especially to power plants in the coming months. With higher output, CIL is aiming to increase its dispatches further, especially to power plants in the coming months.

Coal India, which accounts for more than 80 per cent of domestic coal output, is one of the major suppliers of fossil fuel to the power sector. The coal ministry had earlier said that the current power crisis is mainly on account of the sharp decline in electricity generation from different fuel sources and not due to the non-availability of domestic coal.

Coal Secretary A K Jain had attributed the low coal stocks to power plants to several factors

such as heightened power demand due to the boom in the economy post-COVID-19, early arrival of summer, rise in the price of gas and imported coal and sharp fall in electricity generation by coastal thermal power plants. He had said that a slew of measures are already underway to enhance the total power supply in the country.

The gas-based power generation which has fallen drastically in the country has aggravated the crisis.

The coastal thermal power plants are now generating around half of their capacity because of the sharp rise in the prices of imported coal. This has resulted in a gap between the demand and supply of electricity. The secretary had further said that States located in the South and West have been dependent on imported coal.

When domestic coal is dispatched through wagons/ rakes to the domestic coal-based plants in these States to make up for the loss in imported coal generation, the turnaround time of rakes is more than 10 days, which creates rake availability issues for other plants.

Rana couple granted bail

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, May 4: A Mumbai Court Wednesday granted conditional bail to independent MP Navneet Rana and her MLA husband Ravi Rana, who were arrested in the 'Hanuman Chalisa' recital case.

The couple was arrested from their home after giving a call for reciting Hanuman Chalisa outside Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's private residence.

According to their lawyer Rizwan Merchant, the duo shall be released on a bail of Rs 50,000 each, ordered not to speak to the media pertaining to the case under investigations and refrain from tampering with evidence, etc.

The Rana duo was booked and arrested by Khar Police Station April 23 and slapped with several charges, including sedition, breach of public peace, making inciting statements, and other sections for their plans to chant 'Hanuman Chalisa' outside the Thackeray's personal home, 'Matoshri' in Bandra east.

The Special Public Prosecutor Pradip Gharat argued that chanting of Hanuman Chalisa could incite religious passions, which was strongly opposed by the Ranas' lawyers.

LOUDSPEAKER ROW

Hundreds of MNS workers detained in parts of Maha



Police personnel stand guard outside a mosque after Maharashtra Navnirman Sena called for agitation outside mosques, at Hajuri in Thane **PTI PHOTO**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 4: Mumbai Police Wednesday detained a number of MNS workers gathered outside party chief Raj Thackeray's residence here, a day after the latter urged people to play Hanuman Chalisa on loudspeakers wherever they hear loudspeakers blaring 'azaan', while a similar action was taken against hundreds of party activists in other parts of the state, including Pune, Thane and Nashik cities.

In Pune and neighbouring Pimpri Chinchwad, 200 Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) workers and party functionaries were detained, while 12 party activists were arrested in Thane.

Outside Raj Thackeray's residence in Shivaji Park area of central Mumbai, police detained several MNS activists, but party functionaries Sandeep Deshpande and Santosh Dhuri managed to quickly leave from the spot in a vehicle when a police team tried to catch them. A female police constable fell down while taking the action against MNS workers outside the party chief's home.

Heavy police security was deployed in Mumbai in the wake of Thackeray's call for "silencing" loudspeakers atop mosques.

Police deployment outside Thackeray's residence 'Shivtirath' was also enhanced and barricades were placed on the road for smooth traffic movement. MNS functionaries Sandeep Deshpande and Santosh Dhuri were earlier served

notices under Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) Section 149 (for preventing cognisable offences).

After meeting Raj Thackeray Wednesday, Deshpande came out and was speaking to reporters when a police team came towards him and tried to take him into custody. However, Deshpande quickly sat in an SUV and left from the spot. The police detained some other MNS workers and took them to the Shivaji Park police station in a private taxi, the official said.

In Pune, a total of 11 MNS workers/office-bearers, including the party's state secretary Ajay Shinde, were detained as a precautionary measure after they came out of the Khalkar Maruti temple in the city after performing 'maha aarti' and recital of Hanuman Chalisa, police said. "We detained a total of 58 party workers and party functionaries under relevant sections of Bombay Police Act. As adequate police bandobast was deployed in the city, no law and order situation arose anywhere," Pune police commissioner Amitabh Gupta said.

Before being detained, Shinde told reporters that 'maha aartis and recitation of the Hanuman Chalisa were being done at various places in the city, as per directions of MNS chief Raj Thackeray. "We performed the 'maha aarti' and recited Hanuman Chalisa at the Khalkar Maruti temple," said Shinde. Meanwhile, another senior police official said most of the mosques in Pune refrained from playing the early morning 'azaan' on loudspeakers, following the Supreme Court guidelines.

ELGAR CASE

Teltumbde went abroad to further Red activities: NIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 4: Activist Anand Teltumbde, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, used to visit countries like Canada, Pakistan and the USA to further the activities of CPI (Maoist) at the international level, the NIA told a special court here Wednesday.

Reiterating that Teltumbde (accused number 10) is a senior member of the CPI (Maoist) and working in urban areas, the agency also claimed that there was evidence about the allocation of Rs 10 lakh by the CPI (Maoist) to him for his international campaign and visits for the furtherance of its agenda.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) made these claims in its written reply to the discharge plea filed by the activist before the special court judge D E Kothalikar. In his plea filed through his lawyers Sathyanarayanan and Neeraj Yadav, Teltumbde has claimed that the probe agency has not produced any material to show that he is a member of CPI (Maoist) or his alleged role in the Elgar-Parishad case. In its reply, the NIA said, "In order to further the activities of CPI (Maoist) on an international level, he used to attend international conferences under the guise of his visits to Canada, Pakistan, USA, France, etc."



BEATING THE HEAT: A worker quenches his thirst on a hot summer day at a construction site in Agra, Uttar Pradesh **PTI PHOTO**

Man enters classroom, sexually assaults 2 girls

It claimed that when the students informed the principal about the incident, they were told to keep quiet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 4: A man allegedly entered the classroom of a civic body-run school in east Delhi and sexually assaulted two eight-year-old girls before undressing himself and urinating in front of the students, Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) said Wednesday.

Police said no CCTV camera was installed at the entrance of the school and on the premises.

The Delhi Police said it has registered a case in connection with the sexual assault of the girls at the East Delhi Municipal Corporation

DELHI SHOCKER



(EDMC) school in Bhajanpura but did not divulge details of the incident.

While the DCW has issued a no-

tice to the police and EDMC in connection with the matter, East Delhi Mayor Shyam Sunder Aggarwal said, a "lapse" has happened and a probe has been ordered.

The civic body-run schools have students up to class 5. In its notice, the DCW said April 30, after the school assembly, students were waiting for their teacher inside the class when an unknown man entered the classroom.

He allegedly removed the clothes of a girl and muttered obscenities at her. Then he walked over to another girl and removed her clothes and his clothes as well. Thereafter,

the accused closed the door of the classroom and urinated in front of the students, the DCW said in its notice. This is a serious matter and warrants immediate action, it said.

According to police, cognizance was taken immediately and a case has been registered under the POCSO Act and an investigation has been taken up.

A special team has been formed to investigate the matter. Also, special wings of the force have been roped in to assist the police station team in the probe, a senior police officer said.

Climate change takes toll on Goa's feni

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, May 4: The perils of climate change may well take a toll on Goa's favourite alcoholic beverage, 'cashew feni'.

Last year, the state recorded nearly 27,366 tonnes of cashew production, but this year the production is expected to plummet to unprecedented levels.

Mac Vaz, founder president of the Cashew Feni Distillers and Bottlers Association, said that prices of feni may go up by 30 per cent.

"I am worried about the distillers and bottlers as feni production has dropped. As distilling feni is their bread and butter and they may face loss this year, I feel the government should help them," he said.

"The second fear I have is that due to the shortage of feni, some may take to production of spurious



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

flavoured feni, which may spoil the image and taste of feni. We will have to keep a check on any such activity because feni is our heritage," he added.

Grurudatta Bhakta, the current President of the Association, said, "Definitely, prices will increase at

the end point. last year, we used to purchase a 35-litre can of feni for Rs 3,800 to 4,000, which has now gone up to Rs 5,000." He added that there will be a 20 per cent price rise of feni.

Cashew distillery owner Kessey Saluzinho Aguir from South Goa said that due to the drop in cashew

An unprecedented drop in cashew production in Goa has in turn affected the production of cashew feni, with industry stakeholders indicating a drop by over 70-80%

The short fall may not just result in a hike in prices of feni to the tune of 20-30% but has also fuelled fear of spurious versions of the traditional brew, which is one of the cheapest alcohols in Goa

Cashew feni is also the country's first indigenous liquor to obtain the Geographical Indication tag, a process which was initiated by the local manufacturers of the brew in 2009

Feni, a drink commonly and socially consumed by the local residents of the coastal state, was notified as the state heritage drink by the Goa government in 2016

production, they are facing problems to meet the cashew feni demand. "We could barely sustain the production of 'urrak' and now we have no source for production of feni," he said.

'Urrak' is obtained from the single distillation process, while once

double distilled, the drink is referred to as feni. Urrak, which is a seasonal drink containing alcohol, is consumed with lime juice. However, feni is blended with spices like clove, pepper, nutmeg and cinnamon to make another variation called 'masala feni'.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jammu, May 4: A Pakistani tunnel has been detected near the International Border (IB) near the Chak Faqira border outpost in the Samba sector of Jammu, officials said Wednesday.

"On Tuesday, a special tunnel checking exercise was carried out in the AOR (Area of Responsibility) of Chak Faqira border outpost by the BSF. During the exercise, a freshly dug-up tunnel was detected," sources said.

"Based on our inputs obtained through interrogation of terrorist associates involved in the Sunjwan encounter two days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jammu last month, we could identify the pick-up point of terrorists after crossing over from Pakistan in Samba district. This tunnel has been detected today after a long search of two weeks. Possibility of another such tunnel can't be ruled out," the sources in the security set-up added.

international

of the day quote

My only demand is to conduct the election under the chairmanship of a neutral CEC. Let the people decide (the country's fate)

IMRAN KHAN | FORMER PM, PAKISTAN

We as a country was living behind our means, all governments have spent more than they earned

ALI SABRY | FINANCE MINISTER, SRI LANKA

The best thing we can do for peace is to reintegrate those who in the moment of despair became terrorists but now want to ... Contribute to the well-being of their brothers and sisters

ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

SHORT TAKES

Pak drops further on journos' safety

Karachi: Pakistan has dropped further on the list of countries in terms of protection of journalists in a report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), media reports said. According to the RSF report, Pakistan has fallen by 12 places to 157 out of 180 countries. Last year, Pakistan was ranked 145th on the list, Geo News reported. Expressing his concern on the worsening situation, the President of Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), Kazim Khan, said that one can disagree with the editorial policy, but no one can impose their decision on an institution.

North Korea fires ballistic missile

Seoul: North Korea has launched a ballistic missile toward its eastern waters Wednesday, South Korean and Japanese officials said, days after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to bolster his nuclear arsenal "at the fastest possible pace" and threatened to use them against rivals. The launch, the North's 14th round of weapons firing, also came six days before a new conservative South Korean president takes office for a single five-year term. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement that the missile was fired from the North's capital region and flew to the waters off its eastern coast.

Wildfires rage in New Mexico

Houston: Nearly 6,000 residents have been forced to evacuate as large wildfires continue spreading in the southwestern US mountain state of New Mexico, the state's Governor, Michelle Lujan Grisham has said. "I have 6,000 people evacuated, I have families who don't know what the next day looks like," Lujan Grisham told a news briefing, urging US President Joe Biden to declare a disaster so as to free up federal financial assistance.

Bus accident in Uganda kills 20

Kampala: Ugandan police say 20 people have been killed after a passenger bus crashed into a tea estate off a highway in western Uganda. Police said at least seven of the victims in the Wednesday morning accident are minors. There was no immediate information on what caused the accident, among the deadliest in Uganda in recent years. The bus was travelling from the city of Fort Portal to the Ugandan capital, Kampala.

HIGH PRICE FOR PUTIN'S AGGRESSION

EU targets Russian oil, banks

The plan, if agreed by EU governments, would be a watershed for the world's largest trading bloc, which remains dependent on Russian energy and must find alternative supplies

REUTERS

Kyiv/Brussels, May 4: The EU proposed its toughest sanctions yet against Russia Wednesday, including a phased oil embargo, as Ukraine came under further heavy Russian bombardment and nervously monitored large-scale army drills in neighbouring Belarus, a close Moscow ally.

Nearly 10 weeks into a war that has killed thousands, uprooted millions and flattened cities and towns in eastern and southern Ukraine, Russia also stepped up attacks on targets in western Ukraine, partly to disrupt Western arms deliveries.

Piling pressure on Russia's already battered \$1.8 trillion economy, the European Commission proposed phasing out supplies of Russian crude oil within six months and refined products by the end of 2022. The price of Brent crude jumped 3% to more than \$108 a barrel after the news.

"(President Vladimir) Putin must pay a price, a high price, for his brutal aggression," Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen told the European Parliament in Strasbourg, to applause from lawmakers.



We now propose a ban on Russian oil. This will be a complete import ban on all Russian oil, seaborne and pipeline, crude and refined. We will make sure that we phase out Russian oil in an orderly fashion

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | CHIEF, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

She also announced sanctions targeting Russia's largest bank Sberbank, two other lenders, three state broadcasters as well as army officers and other individuals accused of war crimes.

The EU has yet to target Russian natural gas, used to heat homes and generate electricity across the bloc. The Kremlin said Russia was looking at various options in response to the EU plans, adding that the sanctions would greatly increase costs for European citizens.

Announcing the surprise military drills, Belarus's defence ministry said they posed no threat to its neighbours, but Ukraine's border service said it could not exclude the possibility that Belarusian forces might join Russia's assault.

UK bans services exports to Russia

London: The UK government Wednesday announced a ban on services exports to Russia over the ongoing conflict with Ukraine, cutting Moscow off any business with UK sectors such as management consultancy, accountancy and public relations. UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said the latest set of measures will mean Russia's businesses can no longer benefit from the UK's world class accountancy, management consultancy, and PR services, which account for 10 per cent of Russian imports in these sectors. "Doing business with Putin's regime is morally bankrupt and helps fund a war machine that is causing untold suffering across Ukraine," said Truss. "Cutting Russia's access to British services will put more pressure on the Kremlin and ultimately help ensure Putin fails in Ukraine," she said. The British government claims Russia is "heavily reliant" on Western services companies for the production and export of manufactured goods, and the new ban will further ratchet up economic pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

COVID SCARE IN CHINA

Beijing restricts public transport



REUTERS

Beijing, May 4: The Chinese capital Beijing shut dozens of metro stations and bus routes Wednesday in its campaign to stop the spread of Covid-19 and avoid the fate of Shanghai where millions of residents have been under strict lockdown for more than a month.

China's uncompromising battle against the coronavirus, which is believed to have emerged in Wuhan city in late 2019, is undermining its growth and hurting the international companies invested

Beijing shuts more than 60 metro stations, 158 bus routes
Shanghai finds it difficult to exit month-long lockdown

there, according to the latest forecasts and data.

The central city of Zhengzhou, home to 12.6 million people and a factory of Apple's iPhone manufacturer Foxconn, announced work-from-home and other Covid curbs for the coming week late Tuesday, joining dozens of big cities under some form of lockdown.

The capital shut more than 60 subway stations, about 15% of the network, and 158 bus routes, service providers said. Most of the suspended stations and routes are in the Chaoyang district, the epicentre of Beijing's outbreak.

The city of 22 million people has closed schools, restaurants, gyms and entertainment venues, as well as some businesses and residential buildings in high-risk areas.

40mn more pushed into acute hunger in 2021: UN

Among 53 countries facing the problem, the most affected include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Yemen and Afghanistan where millions face hunger after the country plunged into financial crisis following the Taliban takeover in 2021

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Paris, May 4: The number of people facing hunger rose to 193 million last year as conflict, climate

change and economic crises ravaged people's livelihoods, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization said Wednesday.

While experts have warned that Russia's war in Ukraine could cause famine, the FAO said in an annual report that nearly 40 million more people were pushed into "acute food insecurity" in 2021.

The United Nations defines "acute food insecurity" as when a person's inability to consume adequate food puts their lives or livelihoods in immediate danger. "This is hunger that threatens to slide into famine and cause widespread death," the FAO said.

The number has risen constantly since the first report was published by the FAO, the World Food Programme and the European Union in 2016.

The increase in 2021 has been "driven by a toxic triple combina-



We're at an inflection point in history, for real -- it comes along about every six or eight generations -- where things are changing so rapidly that we have to be in control. Folks, there's an ongoing battle in the world between autocracy and democracy

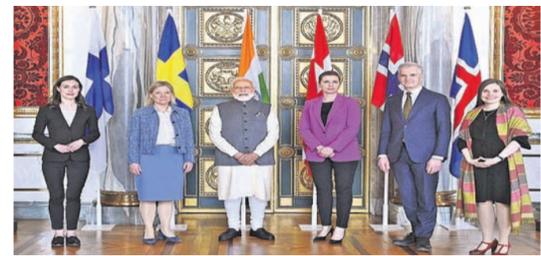
JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

MET GALA BRINGS IN A RECORD \$17.4 MILLION

All that "gilded glamour" brought in some real gold. This year's Met Gala earned a record \$17.4 million, museum officials said. The annual gala is a fundraiser for the self-funding Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art



PM Modi attends 2nd India-Nordic summit



THE SUMMIT SAW THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PMs OF DENMARK, FINLAND, ICELAND, NORWAY AND SWEDEN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Copenhagen, May 4: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday said there is much that India and the Nordic countries can achieve and contribute to global prosperity and sustainable development.

The Prime Minister said this after attending the second India-Nordic summit in Denmark that primarily focused on cooperation in post-pandemic economic recovery, climate change and renewable energy.

"The India-Nordic Summit will go a long way in boosting India's ties with the region. Together, there is much that our nations can achieve and contribute to global prosperity and sustainable development," Modi tweeted.

The first India-Nordic summit was held in Stockholm in 2018.

"The 2nd India-Nordic Summit commences. A boost to our multifaceted cooperation with the Nordic region in areas like emerging technologies, investment, clean energy, Arctic research and more," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson

A ROYAL VISIT

Queen of Denmark Margrethe II extended a warm reception to Prime Minister Narendra Modi here Tuesday. Prime Minister Modi felicitated the Queen on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of her reign, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said on Twitter. The 82-year-old Queen has been Denmark's reigning monarch since 1972. The Danish monarchy is one of the oldest in the world. "Her Majesty, the Queen of the Kingdom of Denmark, Margrethe II extended a warm reception to PM @narendramodi. Prime Minister felicitated Her Majesty on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of her reign," Bagchi said in a tweet.



Arindam Bagchi tweeted earlier: Modi arrived in Denmark Wednesday after concluding his visit to Germany where he held extensive talks with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and attended the sixth India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations.

AGAINST ABORTION



A demonstrator holds a sign during a protest outside the US Supreme Court, after the leak of a draft majority opinion written by Justice Samuel Alito preparing for a majority of the court to overturn the landmark Roe v Wade abortion rights decision later this year, in Washington, US

Comedian Chappelle attacked on stage

REUTERS

Washington, May 4: American comedian Dave Chappelle was attacked on stage Tuesday night at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles by an assailant who tackled him to the ground before being apprehended and arrested, video footage verified by Reuters showed.

A Los Angeles Police Department spokesperson Wednesday identified the suspect as 23-year-old Isaiah Lee, who was being held in jail on a \$30,000 bond after being charged with felony assault with a deadly weapon.

Lee had a replica gun that contained a knife blade when he attacked Chappelle, the spokesperson said. There was no court hearing scheduled for Lee, according to online jail records. It was not immediately clear whether Chappelle, 48, was injured in the attack, or what motivated it.

Video footage posted on Twitter showed the assailant running onto the stage and launching his upper body into Chappelle, slamming his shoulder into the comedian's ribs and chest. After the initial contact, the assailant and Chappelle took several steps before both fell to the floor. The assailant then stood up and ran around the stage, dodging a swarm of people for several seconds before they tackled him near the back of the stage.

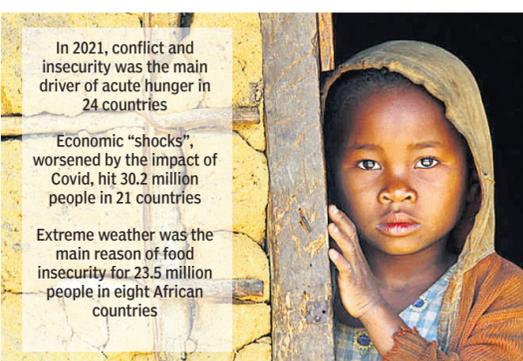
Post-Soviet leader of Belarus no more

REUTERS

London, May 4: Former Belarus leader Stanislav Shushkevich, the man who broke the news to Mikhail Gorbachev that the Soviet Union was being consigned to history, has died at the age of 87, Belarusian media quoted his wife as saying Wednesday.

Shushkevich was one of the three main actors, with Russian president Boris Yeltsin and Ukraine's Leonid Kravchuk, at a meeting in a Belarusian hunting lodge in December 1991 at which they sounded the death knell of the former superpower led by Gorbachev.

"The USSR as a geopolitical reality, and as a subject of international law, has ceased to exist," they said in a joint statement announcing the formation of a new Commonwealth of Independent States.



In 2021, conflict and insecurity was the main driver of acute hunger in 24 countries

Economic "shocks", worsened by the impact of Covid, hit 30.2 million people in 21 countries

Extreme weather was the main reason of food insecurity for 23.5 million people in eight African countries

tion of conflict, weather extremes and economic shocks", with people affected in 53 countries, the FAO said. Although the report does not take into account the conflict in Ukraine, the FAO said the war

"stands to have the most devastating impacts on food crisis countries and on those on the brink of famine".

Russia and Ukraine are major exporters of essential agricultural

products, ranging from wheat and sunflower oil to fertiliser, and the FAO has previously said the conflict sent world food prices to an all-time high in March.

"The war has already highlighted the interconnected nature and fragility of global food systems," the FAO said. The FAO warned that the "outlook moving forward is not good".

"Today, if more is not done to support rural communities, the scale of the devastation in terms of hunger and lost livelihoods will be appalling," the report said. "Urgent humanitarian action is needed on a massive scale to prevent that from happening," it said.

The FAO said it needs \$1.5 billion to stabilise and increase local food production in at-risk regions where planting season is starting. "There is no time to waste," it said as it meets on the issue today.

of the day quote

Appetite for luxury stays and hotels was always strong amongst Indian travellers. It is interesting to note people from non-metros are also warming up to the idea of rejuvenating or holidaying at a luxury stay

VIPUL PRAKASH | COO, MAKEMYTRIP

Excited by the momentum in businesses joining the global selling program and by the growing demand for Made in India products across the world, I am super excited to announce that we are doubling down and raising our pledge to enable \$20 billion in cumulative exports by 2025

AMIT AGARWAL | SENIOR VP FOR INDIA, AMAZON

We have solidified our position as a major renewable energy player with unmatched prowess across the solar Engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) value chain and are committed to continuing our steadfast efforts to help India achieve its clean energy goals

PRAVEER SINHA | CEO & MD, TATA POWER

SHORT TAKES

Hero MotoCorp shares decline 3%

New Delhi: Shares of Hero MotoCorp fell by 3 per cent Wednesday, a day after the company said its consolidated profit after tax declined by 30 per cent in the fourth quarter ended March 2022. The stock went lower by 3 per cent to settle at ₹2,411.90 on the BSE. During the day, it declined 3.48 per cent to ₹2,399.75. At the NSE, it dipped 2.78 per cent to ₹2,417.95 apiece.

AGEL net profit rises over 16%

New Delhi: Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) Wednesday posted over 16 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to ₹121 crore in the March quarter compared to year ago, mainly on the back of higher revenues. The consolidated net profit of the company was ₹104 crore in the quarter ended on March 31, 2021, a statement showed. Total income of the company in the March quarter also increased to ₹1,587 crore, from ₹1,082 crore in the same period a year ago.

Honda debuts in EV with City e:HEV

New Delhi: Honda Cars India Wednesday said it has launched City e:HEV priced at ₹19.49 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi), marking its debut in the strong hybrid electric vehicle segment in the country. The City e:HEV is the first car in the mainstream segment equipped with strong hybrid electric technology, the automaker said in a statement. As per the company, the model, an extension of its City model range, features self-charging two-motor strong hybrid system connected to a 1.5 litre petrol engine, entailing a peak power of 126 PS and fuel efficiency of 26.5 km per litre.

Future Retail MD, Secretary resigns

New Delhi: Future Retail Managing Director Rakesh Biyani has stepped down while officials, including the company secretary of the debt-ridden firm, have tendered resignations. The Future Group flagship firm is facing an insolvency petition by its lenders before the National Company Law Tribunal. There is an exodus of people from the board and at other levels in several Future group companies after Rs 24,713 crore deal was called off by Reliance Retail.



We don't see a case for any control on exports.Wheat exports are on and in fact the government is facilitating the traders

SUHANSHU PANDEY | FOOD SECRETARY

OLA ELECTRIC PIPS RIVALS

Ola Electric has grabbed the top spot in the fast-growing electric vehicle (EV) market in India, in just five months of launching its first e-scooter. According to the government's Vahan portal data, Ola registered 12,689 e-scooter units in April, Okinawa Autotech registered about 10,000 e-scooters while Hero Electric registered 6,571 units



'RBI wants to act before inflation derails growth'

It is for the first time since August 2018 that the key interest rate has been hiked by the Reserve Bank with an aim to check the rising inflation. The CRR too has been increased by 50 bps to suck out ₹87,000 crore liquidity from the system

REPO RATE HIKE

Mumbai, May 4: The RBI's surprise rate hike Wednesday suggests that the central bank wants to act quickly before inflation derails the growth recovery, experts said.

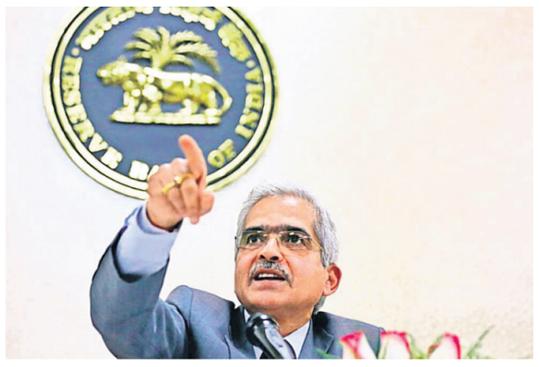
In a move that will raise borrowing costs for corporate and individuals, the RBI after an unscheduled MPC meeting hiked the benchmark lending rate by 40 basis points (bps) to 4.40 per cent to contain inflation that has remained stubbornly above the target of 6 per cent for the last three months.

"We believe that the lending rates may go up gradually, and since there is enough liquidity in the system, our borrowing cost may go up only gradually. Most of the borrowing for us is fixed in nature and hence the rate hike will not have an immediate impact on borrowing cost," said Umesh Revankar, Vice Chairman and MD, Shriram Transport Finance.

According to V Swaminathan, Executive Chairman, Andromeda and Apanaisa, the rate hike was on the cards as the policymakers were under immense pressure due to the rising inflation in the country and at the global level.

"All the loans that come under the Repo Linked Loan Rate (RLLR), especially the home loan and the Loan against Property will now cost higher and there can be a subsequent increase in other loans EMI as most of the banks have already started increasing the MCLR since the beginning of this fiscal year," he said.

Abhishek Goenka, founder of IFA Global, said the RBI did feel the



I would, therefore, like to emphasise that our monetary policy actions today - aimed at lowering inflation and anchoring inflation expectations - will strengthen and consolidate the medium-term growth prospects of the economy. We remain mindful of the possible near-term impact of higher interest rates on output. Our actions will, therefore, be calibrated

SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RBI

reflected in their prices and communication. The market was expecting a rate hike by RBI but in a slower pace," he said.

"We expected a hike in June. The surprise move by the RBI to raise the policy rates a month earlier suggests that it does not want to wait and watch but act quickly before inflation derails the growth recovery," said Rumki Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte India.

Pradeep Multani, President, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said though the RBI's step is aimed at addressing the inflationary pressure, hike in the repo rate and CRR will hurt the consumer and business sentiments.

"The economy is still recovering from the pandemic impact of coronavirus, yet there are worries from geo-political developments, such as likely contagious impact on trade and finance," he noted.

Economy faces headwinds from global spillovers: RBI

Mumbai: The RBI Wednesday cautioned that while the Indian economy appears capable of weathering the deterioration in geopolitical conditions amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, it faces headwinds from global spillovers from geopolitical tensions, elevated commodity prices and moderating external demand.

The RBI, however, did not tinker with the GDP growth projection made in April. It had slashed the GDP growth projection for the fiscal 2022-23 to 7.2 per cent from its earlier forecast of 7.8 per cent.

The committee said that in this high-voltage global environment, it is useful to take stock of the domestic macroeconomic and financial conditions.

The rebound in domestic economic activity that took hold with the ebbing of the Omicron wave is turning out to be increasingly broad-based.

"As regards the outlook for domestic economic activity, the forecast of a normal southwest monsoon brightens the prospects for kharif production. The recovery in contact-intensive services is expected to be sustained, with the ebbing of the third wave and the growing vaccination coverage," the central bank said.

Also, investment activity should get an uplift from the robust government capex, improving capacity utilisation, stronger corporate balance sheets and congenial financial conditions.

"On the other hand, the worsening external environment, elevated commodity prices and persistent supply bottlenecks pose formidable headwinds, along with volatility spillovers from monetary policy normalisation in advanced economies," the committee said.

On balance, the Indian economy appears capable of weathering the deterioration in geopolitical conditions, but it is prudent to continuously monitor the balance of risks, said the six-member panel headed by Governor Das.

The governor also said even as the drivers of domestic economic activity are getting stronger, they face headwinds from global spillovers in the form of protracted and intensifying geopolitical tensions; elevated commodity prices; Covid-19 related lockdowns or restrictions in some major economies.

The economy is also facing headwinds from slowing external demand, and tightening global financial conditions on the back of monetary policy normalisation in advanced economies.

These risks are evolving on the lines anticipated in the April statement after the MPC meeting and appear to be lingering, Das said.

Musk says Twitter may charge slight fee for commercial, government users

Washington, May 4: Elon Musk said Tuesday Twitter Inc will always be free for casual users but may charge a slight fee for commercial and government users, as the billionaire entrepreneur tries to boost the social media platform's reach from "niche" to most Americans.

"Twitter will always be free for casual users, but maybe a slight cost for commercial/government users," Musk said in a tweet.

Tesla chief Musk has been suggesting a raft of changes to Twitter since last month. After adding the company to his cart recently, Musk said he wanted to enhance the platform with new features, make the algorithms open source to increase trust, defeat spam bots, and authenticate all humans.

Last month, even before reaching a deal with Twitter, Musk had suggested few changes to the Twitter Blue premium subscription service, including slashing its price.

Earlier this week at the annual Met Gala in New York on Monday, Musk also said he would make Twitter transparent about how tweets are promoted or demoted and wanted its software to be publicly available for critique.

Elon Musk, who has agreed to take Twitter Inc. private in a \$44-billion deal, has told potential investors he could return the social-media company to public ownership after just a few years.

Musk said he plans to stage an initial public offering of Twitter in as little as three years of buying it, according to people familiar with the matter. The deal is expected to close later this year, subject to conditions including the approval of Twitter shareholders and regulators, the company has said.

Dalmia Bharat, FLSmidth join hands to develop sustainability solutions

Bhubaneswar May 4: Aiming to enhance research and development of disruptive solutions for next generation cement manufacturing, Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Ltd tied hands with Danish multinational FLSmidth & Co with objective to substitute conventional energy with renewable resources.

A MoU under this regard was signed under the "Green Strategic Partnership" initiatives between the two multinationals at Denmark forming a cornerstone exchange of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's three nation European visit, focussed to boost ties in the areas of trade, energy and green technology.

As per the MoU, both companies will cooperate on a wide spectrum of focus areas such as creating new ideas and breakthrough solutions to substitute conventional energy with renewable resources through chemical composition analysis and innovations in the combustion methods. They will also work to identify solutions to eliminate greenhouse gases and other emissions to reach the long term goal of zero emissions by integrating primary mitigation and filtration methods.

Moreover, both sides will commit to contribute ideas and R&D for an industrial scale cement production facility where breakthrough sustainability innovations for cement and construction industry would be developed.

POLICYHOLDERS' PORTION OVERSUBSCRIBED LIC IPO day 1: Issue subscribed 67%

LIC has already mopped up a little over ₹5,627 crore from anchor investors led primarily by domestic institutions. Anchor Investors (AIs) portion (5,92,96,853 equity shares) was subscribed at ₹949 per equity share



New Delhi, May 4: LIC's public offer, the country's biggest-ever IPO, saw the policyholders' portion being oversubscribed on the first day itself Wednesday, though overall subscription stood at 67 per cent.

The government aims to generate about ₹21,000 crore by selling 3.5 per cent stake in the insurance behemoth. LIC's initial public offering (IPO), open for retail and institutional investors, is set to close May 9. The issue period also includes bidding Saturday, May 7.

The portion reserved for policyholders was subscribed 1.9 times, while that for employees was fully subscribed during the first day itself, as per data available on the BSE.

LIC has fixed the price band at ₹902-949 per equity share for the issue. The offer includes a reservation for eligible employees and policyholders. The retail investors and eligible employees will get a discount of ₹45

per equity share, while policyholders will get a discount of ₹60.

However, demand from qualified institutional buyers (QIBs) and non-institutional investors was muted. The non-institutional investors' portion was subscribed 27 per cent while QIBs' portion was slightly higher at 33 per cent.

Retail Individual Investor category picked up nearly 60 per cent of the 6.9 crore shares set aside for this segment.

The offer received bids for 10,86,45,360 shares against the offered 16,20,78,067 equity shares (excluding shares offered to anchor investors), as per data available on the bourses at 7 pm.

The share sale is through an offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to 22.13 crore equity shares. The shares are likely to be listed on May 17.

LIC reduced its IPO size to 3.5 per cent from 5 per cent decided earlier due to the prevailing choppy market conditions. Even after the reduced size of about ₹20,557 crore, LIC

IPO is going to be the biggest initial public offering ever in the country. So far, the amount mobilised from the IPO of Paytm in 2021 was the largest ever at ₹18,300 crore, followed by Coal India (2010) at nearly ₹15,500 crore and Reliance Power (2008) at ₹11,700 crore.

LIC was formed by merging and nationalising 245 private life insurance companies on September 1, 1956, with an initial capital of ₹5 crore.

Its product portfolio comprises 32 individual products (16 participating and 16 non-participating products) and seven individual optional rider benefits. The insurer's group product portfolio comprises 11 group products.

As of December 2021, LIC had a market share of 61.6 per cent in terms of premiums or GWP, 61.4 per cent in terms of new business premium, 71.8 per cent in terms of the number of individual policies issued, and 88.8 per cent in terms of the number of group policies issued.

1,157 products excluded from UAE free trade pact

New Delhi, May 4: India has kept out as many as 1,157 products, including TVs, picture tubes, soaps, toys, footwear, instant coffee, sharbat, and petroleum waxes, from the ambit of its free trade agreement with UAE. The pact came into force May 1.

Given the sensitivities of these products for the domestic industry, India will not provide any kind of customs duty concessions on the 1,157 goods under the the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), according to FAQs prepared by the commerce ministry on the pact.

The product categories include jewellery (except for 2.5 tonne quota for gold jewellery), plastics, scrap of aluminium and copper, most automobiles and automotive components, medical devices, dairy products, fruits, cereals, sugar, food preparations, tobacco products, dyes and pigments, natural rub-



The CEPA is likely to benefit about \$26 billion worth of Indian products that are subjected to 5 per cent import duty by UAE

Paramount+ declares 2023 India launch with Viacom18

Internationally, the streaming service features an expansive library of original series, hit shows and popular movies across every genre from world-renowned brands and production studios, including SHOWTIME, BET, CBS, Comedy Central, MTV, Nickelodeon, Paramount Pictures and the Smithsonian Channel, in addition to a robust offering of premier local content



Switzerland and Austria in the second half of the year, a press release from Paramount stated.

"Paramount is known for its leading portfolio of premium entertainment brands and a robust content engine that fuels our rapidly expanding streaming service, Paramount+. This year will be monumental for our streaming

strategy as we accelerate our global ambitions, rapidly expanding Paramount+ in Europe beginning with the UK, Italy, Germany, France and more by the end of this year and debut in Asia with South Korea in June, followed by India in 2023," said Raffaele Annetchino, President and CEO, International Networks, Studios and Streaming, Paramount Global, in a statement.

"With an already expansive global footprint and a strong, long-term market-by-market strategy, we are well-poised to continue our positive momentum," added Annetchino.

Paramount+ touted access to the likes of the "Star Trek" universe, new seasons of "Yellowstone" se-

London, May 4: Paramount+, the global streaming service from Paramount Global, will launch in India in 2023 in partnership with Viacom18, as part of a recently announced agreement.

Bob Bakish, President & CEO, Paramount, outlined the company's global plans for the streaming service during its first quarter Earnings Report announcement Tuesday.

The streamer will also be launched in South Korea in June and head to Italy, Germany, France,

ries, as well as "South Park" and the "MTV Shores" franchise, along with kids and families favourites like "SpongeBob SquarePants", "PAW Patrol" and "Rugrats", and other upcoming projects.

It will be available across a variety of devices and platforms, including mobile phones and tablets, Android TV, Apple TV, Apple TV Channels, Chromecast, Roku, Samsung TV (2017+), desktop computers or mobile web at <https://www.paramountplus.com/>, with more to be announced in the future.

The streaming service is currently live in the US, Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Nordics, and Australia.

RCB push Chennai to brink of elimination



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, May 4: Harshal Patel (3/35) and Glenn Maxwell (2/22) led a clinical bowling performance to help Royal Challengers Bangalore register a 13-run win over Chennai Super Kings, pushing the defending champions to the brink of elimination in the IPL here Wednesday.

The quartet of Mahipal Lomror (42, 27b, 3x4, 2x6), skipper Faf du Plessis (38, 22b, 4x4, 1x6), Virat Kohli (30) and Dinesh Karthik (27 n o, 17b, 1x4, 2x6) did well to lift RCB to 173/8. RCB bowlers then restricted the defending champions to 160/8, despite a fifty by opener Devon Conway (56, 37b, 6x4, 2x6). Shabaz Ahmed (1/27), Wanindu Hasaranga (1/31) and Josh Hazlewood (1/19) also picked a wicket each.

With the win RCB moved to fourth position on the points table, while CSK were pushed closer to the brink of elimination as they remained at the penultimate spot.

Defending 174, like CSK, RCB bowlers leaked runs in the Powerplay but left-arm spinner Shabaz and Maxwell took a flurry of wickets between the seventh and 10th overs, including that of

opener Ruturaj Gaikwad (28). Conway provided some resistance but he was sent back to the hut by Maxwell.

With 56 needed off the last five overs, Ravindra Jadeja tried to up the ante but the all-rounder, who has struggled with form all season, hit a slow delivery by Patel over cover straight to Kohli's hands. RCB's death over specialist then struck again, this time getting rid of the dangerous Ali, who was slowing finding his groove.

When Dhoni walked in CSK needed 52 off 24 balls which soon became 39 from the last two overs. The talismanic leader, however, couldn't get his side over the line.

Earlier, the CSK spinners made full use of Dhoni's decision to bowl first as a fit-again Moeen Ali (2/28) and Maheesh Theekshana (3/27) shared five wickets.

Ali rattled the RCB top-order, getting rid of the opening pair of Kohli and Du Plessis, while Theekshana snapped three wickets in the penultimate over: Dwaine Pretorius (1/42) was the other wicket taker for CSK.

Lomror emerged as the top-scorer with his 27-ball knock, while

Karthik hit some lusty blows towards the end to help RCB go past the 170-run mark.

Kohli and Du Plessis batted with authority as the two veterans pummeled the inexperienced pace duo of Mukesh Choudhary (0/30) and Simarjeet Singh (0/21) in the Powerplay. The opening pair extracted 57 runs in the first six overs, RCB's highest Powerplay total this season.

With the uncapped talent going for runs aplenty, skipper Dhoni introduced spin, which slowed down the proceedings for RCB. With the pitch offering turn and bounce, Ali, who returned to the side after an ankle injury, broke the dangerous partnership as Du Plessis found Jadeja at deep midwicket in the eighth over.

A horrible mix up between Kohli and new-man Maxwell (3) spelt the end of the big-hitting Australian's short stay in the middle. It was the fourth time that Kohli was involved in a run-out this season.

RCB was trying to recover from the twin blows, when Ali bowled a brilliant delivery. He pitched the ball up outside off, inviting Kohli for the drive. However, the ball turned past the inside edge and clattered the stumps, the former Indian skipper's struggles against Ali's spin continued.

Lomror and Rajat Patidar (21) then shared a quick 44-run stand but Dhoni re-introduced pace in the form of Pretorius and the South African struck in his very first delivery, getting rid of Patidar.

Lomror was dropped on 33 by Jadeja, but the batter couldn't capitalise on the reprieve as he became Theekshana's first victim in the 19th over. The Sri Lankan then went on to dismiss compatriot Wanindu Hasaranga and Shahbaz Ahmed.

BRIEF SCORES: RCB 173/8 (Mahipal Lomror 42, Faf du Plessis 38, Virat Kohli 30; Maheesh Theekshana 3/27, Moeen Ali 2/28) beat CSK 160/8 (Devon Conway 56, Moeen Ali 34; Harshal Patel 3/35, Glenn Maxwell 2/22) by 13 runs.

Reds survive scare, enter CL final

LIVERPOOL CAME FROM TWO GOALS DOWN AT HALFTIME TO WIN SEMIFINAL SECOND LEG 3-2 SEALING A 5-2 AGGREGATE VICTORY OVER VILLARREAL

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Villarreal (Spain), May 4: Liverpool players stared at each other in disbelief. By the bench, manager Jurgen Klopp watched in awe.

Just like that, Liverpool had squandered its two-goal lead from the first leg of the Champions League semifinals against Villarreal, and its spot in the final was suddenly in jeopardy.

Would Liverpool be the latest powerhouse to be stunned by the modest Spanish club? Would its bid for a seventh European title end in disappointment? Luckily for the English club, it was only a scar.

Liverpool rallied in the second half to defeat Villarreal 3-2 and reach its third Champions League final in five seasons Tuesday. It advanced 5-2 on aggregate at the La Ceramica Stadium.

After Boulaye Dia and Francis Coquelin put Villarreal ahead by the 41st minute, Fabinho, substitute Luis Diaz and Sadio Mane scored in the second half to propel Liverpool into the final for the first time since winning its sixth European title in 2019. It will be Liverpool's 10th final in Europe's



DOING IT IN STYLE: Luis Diaz (2nd from R) is congratulated by teammate Virgil van Dijk after scoring the equaliser against Villarreal, Tuesday

top club competition.

Based in a city of 50,000 people in southern Spain, Villarreal had eliminated Juventus in the round of 16 and Bayern Munich in the quarterfinals.

Unai Emery's team played a man down from the 86th after Etienne Capoue, who assisted on both Villarreal's goals, was sent off with a second yellow card.

Liverpool will play the May 28 final in Paris against either Premier League rivals Manchester City or 13-time European champions Real Madrid. The victory also keeps alive Liverpool's hopes of a 'quadruple' — winning all four major trophies in one season.

It didn't take long for Villarreal to cut into the first-leg deficit as Dia opened the scoring from close

range after a pass by Capoue in the third minute.

Villarreal wanted a penalty kick after Giovanni Lo Celso collided with Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker, but a few moments later it got the second goal with a header by former Arsenal midfielder Francis Coquelin into the top corner after a well-placed right-flank cross by Capoue.

The English club improved significantly in the second half. They got the first goal came in the 62nd with a low shot by Fabinho that went through the legs of goalkeeper Gerónimo Rulli.

Liverpool took advantage of Villarreal's letdown and Diaz equalised with a 67th-minute header. Mane got the go-ahead goal on a breakaway in the 74th after getting past Rulli outside the area and shooting into the open net.

With his goal, Mane became the top African scorer in the knockout stage in the Champions League era. He has 15, one more than Mohamed Salah and Didier Drogba.

Liverpool has not been eliminated in the knockout rounds after winning the first leg since 2001-02. It has scored a club-record 139 goals in all competitions this season.

BCCI bans Boria for 2 years for 'bullying' Saha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 4: The BCCI has imposed a two-year ban on Boria Majumdar for "bullying" senior wicket-keeper Wriddhiman Saha and barred him from interviewing registered players and entering stadiums in the country.

According to an internal communication by BCCI, sent to its state units May 3, Majumdar won't be given media accreditation for two years as part of the sanctions ratified by the Apex Council of the cricketing body.

The BCCI had formed a three-member committee February 25 a few days after Saha alleged on so-

cial media that he was bullied for an interview.

While Saha had initially refused to name the journalist, he later identified the scribe as Majumdar while deposing before the three-member committee, which comprised BCCI vice president Rajeev Shukla, BCCI treasurer Arun Singh Dhumal and BCCI councillor Prabhatej Singh Bhatia.

Majumdar could not be reached for a comment following BCCI directive but a few days back he had accused Saha of doctoring and tampering with the screenshots of his WhatsApp chats with the cricketer for damaging his reputation.

BCCI interim CEO and IPL COO Hemang Amin in a letter to the state units wrote, "Wriddhiman Saha has shared screenshots of messages sent by a journalist on social media platform, Twitter, wherein he stated that he felt bullied by the conduct of the said journalist. Mr Saha in the hearing named Mr Boria Majumdar as the journalist."

Amin further stated, "The BCCI Committee considered the submissions by both Mr Saha and Mr Majumdar and concluded that the actions by Mr Majumdar were indeed in the nature of threat and intimidation."

According to Amin, the committee recommended three sanctions to the Apex Council, which ratified them.

The sanctions imposed are - 2 year ban on getting any accreditation as a member of the press in any of the cricket matches (domestic and international) in India, 2 year ban on getting any interview with any registered players in India and 2 years ban on access to any of the BCCI and member associations owned cricket facilities.

The top BCCI official has asked all the state units to facilitate the compliance of the sanctions in their respective associations.

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